

the children's research centre

TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN



RESPONDING TO CHILD BEGGING

an evaluation of the
ispcc leanbh service

by Conor Hickey, Diane Hogan,
Niamh Humphries and Robbie Gilligan



RESPONDING TO CHILD BEGGING
An evaluation of the
ispcc leanbh service



The children's research centre
trinity college dublin

Conor Hickey
Diane Hogan
Niamh Humphries
Robbie Gilligan

© Conor Hickey, Diane Hogan, Niamh Humphries, Robbie Gilligan

Published by:
The Children's Research Centre

in association with:
The Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC)

ISBN 1 902230 09 4

The Children's Research Centre
Áras an Phiarsaigh
Trinity College
Dublin 2
Tel. +353 1 608 29 01
Fax: +353 1 608 23 47
Email: ccentre@tcd.ie
Web: http://www.tcd.ie/Childrens_Centre

The Irish Society for the Prevention of
Cruelty to Children (ISPCC)
20 Molesworth Street
Dublin 2
Tel. +353 1 679 49 44
Fax: +353 1 679 17 46
Email: ispcc@ispcc.ie
Web: <http://www.ispcc.ie>

This research was funded by ISPCC.
The views expressed in this report are the authors' and are not necessarily those of the Children's Research Centre or of the study's funders.

Cover: Language

contents

Foreword	v
Acknowledgements	vii
Chapter 1: Context for the study	1
The Irish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC)	1
The Children's Research Centre	1
Support and supervision of research	2
Advisory Group	2
The aims of the evaluation	2
The Travelling community	4
The Roma community	5
Homeless children	8
Summary	8
Content of Report	8
Chapter 2: Methodology	10
Methods of research	10
Access and ethical issues	11
Research instruments	12
Approach to sampling of clients	13
Chapter 3: Literature review	16
Introduction	16
The extent of child begging in Dublin	16
Child begging as a practice	17
The meaning of begging within Roma and Traveller communities	20
Social conditions	22
Government responses to child begging	23
Practical responses to child begging	26
Conclusion	27
Chapter 4: The Leanbh service	29
Introduction	29
Background to the Leanbh service	29
The establishment of Leanbh	30
Management	31
Financial management of Leanbh	32
Staff	32
Volunteers	32
The operation of the service	33
Key features of the Leanbh service	35
Chapter 5: The Leanbh client group	37
Increasing number of Roma children	37
Leanbh Childhood Support Workers' case work files	38

Sex, age and areas of origin of clients	38
Clients with incomplete information	39
Client profiles	39
Chapter 6: Aims, delivery and impact of Leanbh	43
Aims of Leanbh	43
The delivery of the Leanbh service	46
Impact of Leanbh service	51
Chapter 7: Conclusions, recommendations and options	54
A. Policy issues	54
B. Service development	56
C. Staff and volunteers	57
Summary	59
Bibliography	60
Appendix 1: Parental Consent Letter/form	63
Appendix 2: Income and expenditure: Leanbh 1998, 1999 & 2000	65

FOREWORD

Children begging, either alone or with adults, have always been a feature of Irish society and, despite the continuing strength of the Irish economy, the presence of children begging on the streets of our nation remains a concern for all of us.

The causes underpinning child begging are complex, and a multilateral approach to tackling the problem is needed. The new Children Bill provides the legal framework through which to begin to tackle the problem. Through the National Children's Strategy, the Government is also committed to promoting prevention as an approach to tackling this distressing social problem.

The Leabh Project was established by the ISPCC as an additional effort to address the problem from a child protection perspective. In 2000, following two and a half years of operation of the Leabh service, the Children's Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin, was commissioned to conduct an evaluation.

The Evaluation not only highlights the progress this project has made in moving some families and children away from begging, but also identifies a clear focus for the future development of the project. To support this, the Government, through the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, has allocated funding of £90,000 (€114,300) over the next three years.

As Minister for Children I am fully committed to supporting and helping all children, but especially those who are particularly vulnerable. I believe the Leabh project has helped many families, and I believe that Leabh, along with the other statutory and voluntary agencies working in this area, will help and support many more families in the future.

Creidim go láidir gur féidir dul chun cinn a dhéanamh san obair seo.

*Mary Hanafin, T.D.,
Minister for Children
August 2001*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to:

Paul Gilligan, Chief Executive ISPCC, and Grace Kelly, Director of Services ISPCC, who gave a clear brief and were very responsive to our needs and suggestions,

Caroline O'Sullivan, Carlos Kelly, Annette Macartain, and the Leanbh staff and volunteers who co-operated fully with the research and assisted us in countless ways,

the children, parents and representatives from relevant services who agreed to be interviewed,

the members of the Advisory Group from outside the Children's Research Centre – Ava Battles (ISPCC), Liam Wegimont (Development Education for Youth), Grace Kelly (ISPCC), Brigid Quirke (Pavee Point) and Peter O'Mahony (Irish Refugee Council) – who kindly assisted us in planning and monitoring the progress of the study.

CHAPTER I: CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY

The Leanh service was established in October 1997 by the Irish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC) to work with children who are begging on the streets of Dublin. Leanh was established as a three-year pilot programme and, in March 2000, the ISPCC commissioned the Children's Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin, to undertake this independent evaluation of the service.

The Irish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC)

The ISPCC is a voluntary organisation which provides child-centred services throughout Ireland. There are three main strands to these services, which the ISPCC describes as:

1. Direct access services, such as Childline, STEPS youth advice and counselling centres, and Children's Rights Information Bureaux;
2. Structured parenting initiatives, such as 'Preparing for Parenting';
3. Mobile child and parenting support services (Childhood Support Workers Project). The Leanh project comes under this heading.

The ISPCC describes its ethos, in policy and practice, as child-centred. It is underpinned by the following five key objectives:

1. To facilitate better child/parent relationships;
2. To facilitate better understanding of children's needs and better nurturing of children;
3. To eliminate all violence and abuse in the family or towards children in general;
4. To improve attitudes towards children;
5. To promote the equal citizenship of children.

The Children's Research Centre

The Children's Research Centre was established by Trinity College in 1995 as a joint initiative of the Psychology and Social Studies Departments. The Centre undertakes research and evaluation on issues and policies concerning children and young people. The Centre is multi-disciplinary in approach and works in close collaboration with other members of the University, practitioners, policy makers and international colleagues. It also works, through partnerships, with statutory, voluntary and community bodies concerned with young people. The Centre has a range of publications.

The Centre has a core team of researchers and also relies on contract researchers to conduct some of its work. In the case of this evaluation of the Leanbh service, the Children's Research Centre contracted in two researchers with background experience of the Travelling Community and the refugee and asylum seeking population in Dublin. The team working on the project also included two members of the Centre's staff.

Support and supervision of research

The study was conducted by a research team including Conor Hickey, Niamh Humphries, Robbie Gilligan and led by Dr Diane Hogan. Conor Hickey carried out the main fieldwork and was responsible for drafting the interim and final reports. Niamh Humphries worked mainly on the literature review relating to begging, and liaised with Conor in making contacts with the refugee/asylum seeker population. The research team met regularly to keep updated on progress and to discuss relevant issues, including research methods and analysis of findings.

Advisory Group

An advisory group was established to support the research study. The members of the advisory group were:

- ♦ Diane Hogan (Children's Research Centre)
- ♦ Robbie Gilligan (Children's Research Centre)
- ♦ Conor Hickey (Children's Research Centre)
- ♦ Niamh Humphries (Children's Research Centre)
- ♦ Grace Kelly (ISPCC)
- ♦ Ava Battles (ISPCC)
- ♦ Liam Wegimont (Development Education for Youth)
- ♦ Brigid Quirke (Pavee Point)
- ♦ Peter O'Mahony (Irish Refugee Council)

The role of the advisory group was to support and advise on design, analysis and reporting. The group met three times throughout the course of the research project and was chaired by Robbie Gilligan.

The aims of the evaluation

The aim of the research was to undertake an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Leanbh service in fulfilling its aims and objectives. At the first advisory meeting on the 31st May 2000, the following key questions were discussed and agreed on:

1. What is the nature of the Leanbh service?

- ♦ What were the social conditions and what was the policy context within which it was set up?
- ♦ What does it aim to achieve?
- ♦ What are Leanbh's management and staff structures and systems?
- ♦ How is training carried out (particularly with volunteers)?
- ♦ How does the project operate on a day-to-day basis?

2. Who are the clients of the service?

- ♦ How many children have been identified as being at risk by the Leanbh service (records maintained by the Leanbh service)?
- ♦ How many clients have been targeted (children/parents/other family members)? What are the ages/gender of the children? What are the social circumstances of the clients?
- ♦ Has the number of children who beg decreased since October 1997 when the Leanbh service was established?
- ♦ How many referrals have been made to statutory services and what has been the follow-up/response?

3. How effective is the service in terms of aims, delivery and impact? Has the Leanbh service made a difference to the lives of children who beg?

- ♦ How relevant are the original aims of the service to emerging social conditions?
- ♦ What are the clients' perceptions of the effectiveness of the service (children and parents) in terms of aims, delivery and impact?
- ♦ What are the perceptions of management, staff and volunteers involved with Leanbh?
- ♦ What are the perceptions of other relevant organisations?

It was also agreed to look at whether the practice of statutory bodies has been influenced by Leanbh, in terms of actions or policies, and whether Leanbh has an explicit aim of changing social policy.

It was not within the scope of the evaluation of this service to examine the causes of begging and its solutions. However, the research did seek to identify reasons why families targeted by this service become involved in begging, and sought their views on the changes that would need to take place to take them out of this situation.

From the outset, the ISPCC indicated that the majority of the clients of the service fell into three distinct categories. These were drawn from:

1. the Travelling community
2. the Roma community
3. the homeless

The next section of this introduction gives a brief background to each of these three groups.

The Travelling community

Travellers are a small indigenous minority who, according to historical material, have been part of Irish society for centuries. They have a long shared history, value systems, language, customs and traditions, which make them a group that is recognised, by themselves and others, as distinct. Their distinctive lifestyle and culture, based on the nomadic tradition, sets them apart from the 'settled' population.

There are about 25,000 Travellers in Ireland – approximately 5,000 families. In the greater Dublin area, there are about 800 families (5,000 people). The median age of the Travelling community is 14 years, while the national figure for the general population is 27 years. Only 4.4% of Travellers are over the age of 55. Eighty per cent of Travellers are under 25. Only two per cent of Travellers live to be 65. There is a high natural increase in the Traveller population, with the average family having six children (ESRI, 1986).

Social and cultural context

Travellers have experienced extreme prejudice in Ireland for centuries. Research published in 1996 by Crosscare shows that one in ten people from a national sample would deny citizenship to Irish Travellers.

Only twelve per cent of Traveller children pursue education into secondary school, and the majority of those young people do not continue after the second year. High illiteracy levels further alienate Travellers from mainstream society and its opportunities. The inappropriateness of the educational system to Travellers' way of life makes it difficult for Travellers to pursue education in a normal way (ITM, 1993).

The accommodation status of Travellers is extremely poor and this has serious implications for all other aspects of their lives. John O'Connell, Director of Pavee Point Travellers Centre, said, in 1993, that

Travellers are forced to live in conditions well below what have become normal, acceptable and taken for granted standards for the majority of Irish people.

The returns for the Local Authorities in 1999 showed that, of the 4,790 Traveller families in Ireland, there are 1,207 families still living on the roadside without any basic facilities.

The health status of the Travelling community is far below that of the general population. Infant mortality is three times the national average, and life expectancy is ten years less for men and twelve years less for women than their settled counterparts. One study in Dublin in 1995 showed that fifty-nine per cent of Travellers living in Dublin had neither electricity nor showers. Thirty-six per cent had no toilets and twenty-nine per cent had no running water. Living in such primitive conditions causes many health difficulties for all Travellers (McCarthy, 1995).

History of service delivery to Travellers in Ireland

The traditional view of Travellers was that they were a sub-culture of poverty in need of rehabilitation. Emphasis was on 'hand outs', with pressure on Travellers to 'settle' and become like the rest of society. Recent years have brought a greater recognition of the value and worth of the Traveller culture and identity. This has shaped the way in which services are delivered, and the government's *Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community* (1995) stated that all health and social services should strive to have Traveller input and participation in the delivery of these services.

The need for Traveller-specific services and Traveller participation in the delivery of these services was highlighted in the *Task Force Report* (1995). There is a need for social services in the voluntary sector to align service development with the local and national policies of the health, social and youth services at these levels.

The Roma community

The following is a brief outline of the situation of the Roma community in Dublin. It covers the general situation of the Roma in Eastern Europe, particularly Romania, from where the majority of the Roma in Ireland have originated, and the situation of the Roma in Ireland, from the asylum procedures to their social and economic situation in Ireland today. As there are no Roma support groups in Dublin, the information gathered is from literature detailing the situation of Roma in both Eastern and Western Europe and anecdotal information from those who have worked with the Roma community.

In Eastern Europe, Roma communities 'seem to be still trying to make sense of their position in the post-communist new world which appears to have decided it has no place for Europe's fastest growing ethnic group' (Connolly, 2000). Although Roma minorities have lived throughout Eastern Europe for generations, they appear to have lived on the margins of those societies, in many cases. As Hardy (2000) observed, 'many Roma communities have been settled for centuries as established minorities within countries that still don't accept them'. Indeed, there appear to be considerable similarities in the lived experience of Roma minorities throughout Europe, both east and west. The Irish National Co-ordinating Committee for the European Year Against Racism reported that, 'despite variations between countries in terms of legislation, socio-cultural contexts and policies, Roma, Gypsies, Travellers are

consistently among the most marginalised in their experience of extreme deprivation, poverty and disadvantage' (1997: 8).

Social and cultural context

Anecdotal evidence from groups working with asylum seekers would suggest that the majority of Roma currently seeking asylum in Ireland have originated from Romania. The situation of Roma in Romania, therefore, could be seen as the motivating factor in the majority of Roma applications for asylum in Ireland.

The circumstances of Roma in Romania appear to be bleak, particularly since the fall of communism. Animosity and hatred against the Roma appear to have become widespread, as evidence of increased discrimination and racially motivated attacks abounds. It is within this context of general intolerance and discrimination towards the Roma, coupled with meagre living conditions in Romania and other countries of origin, that 'many impoverished or persecuted Roma in Central and Eastern Europe have been able to extend their nomadism (their traditional survival mechanism) across borders and seek asylum in the west' (Brearley, 1996: 1). They journey west in the hope of finding safety and a chance of earning a living. Nicolae Gheorghe explained that they travel to Ireland because they 'want to be in a country where the economy works well and where there isn't daily prejudice against Gypsies. There is a perception that Ireland which produces a lot of emigrants is still tolerant' (in Ó'hAodha, 1998: 2).

Roma claims for asylum in the West have not, however, been accepted as grounds for refugee status. In 1996, Yaron Matras reported that there was 'in fact not a single known or documented case of a Romani asylum seeker who has been granted asylum or other refugee status based on consideration of ethnic background and the particular situation of Roma in the country of origin' (1996: 1). This is due to the fact that, although Roma may have faced discrimination in their countries of origin, even in terms of racially motivated attacks and daily prejudice, this does not necessarily meet the conditions of the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which determines refugee status on the basis of 'persecution' (rather than 'discrimination').

Roma in Ireland

Anecdotal evidence from groups working with asylum seekers would suggest that there are approximately 2,000-2,500 Roma currently in Ireland. A more accurate figure is difficult to ascertain, as the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform releases statistics on asylum applications on the basis of 'country of origin' rather than on the basis of ethnicity. The majority of Roma in Ireland appear to have come from Romania and there were 1,415 claims for asylum from Romania in the first 6 months of 2000 (26.6% of all asylum claims in that period) (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2000b).

The Roma in Ireland are generally living as 'asylum seekers', that is, they are awaiting the results of their application for refugee status. An asylum seeker is a person who wishes to be recognised as a refugee in accordance with the 1951 *Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*. The Convention states that a refugee is a person who

... owing to a well founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a social group of political opinion, is outside the country of origin and is unable, or owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.

On arrival to Ireland, asylum seekers are initially accommodated in emergency bed-and-breakfast (B&B) accommodation and, until recently, were entitled to receive full social welfare benefits. More recently arrived asylum seekers may be dispersed to emergency accommodation nation-wide and receive 'direct provision' payments, whereby they receive full board and lodgings and a nominal welfare payment.

Prior to the scheme's introduction asylum-seekers had been receiving Supplementary Welfare Assistance (SWA) of £72 per week, were eligible for rent allowance and were permitted to live in private rented accommodation ... Under the direct provision scheme, along with some discretionary payments, asylum seekers get full-board, accommodation and an allowance of £15 a week per adult and £7.50 per child. They are, with few exceptions, not permitted to move into private rented accommodation. As a result they are left with no alternative but to remain in emergency hostels, B&Bs and guesthouses. (O'Mahoney, 2000: 6)

As asylum-seekers are not entitled to avail themselves of education or training opportunities, and few are entitled to work, the majority are therefore in an enforced state of welfare dependency. The recent arrivals are also denied a choice of accommodation, location or even the freedom to prepare their own meals. They are surviving on minimal welfare payments and have no independence, even for the simplest of budgeting matters.

These are the current circumstances of asylum-seekers in Ireland. The most recent arrivals are living in emergency accommodation nation-wide with full board and limited social welfare payments. Those who arrived prior to the introduction of this dispersal system are, for the most part, resident in Dublin and living in either emergency or private rented accommodation. The majority are not entitled to work and are therefore dependant on welfare payments. However, Fonesca (2000) argues that most would prefer to work if given the opportunity.

The Irish Government has recently 'concluded a readmission agreement' with the Romanian authorities to facilitate the deportation and readmission of rejected Romanian asylum claimants and stateless persons to Romania (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2000a). Such developments are obviously worrying for those Roma in Ireland who are awaiting decisions on their asylum claims. Overall, the Roma in Ireland currently face an uncertain future.

Homeless children

The reasons that Irish children become homeless are varied, and many of these are discussed in the report by the Forum on Youth Homelessness (2000).

Becoming homeless is a process and not a single event and there are many reasons why young people become homeless and remain so. Those reasons include physical and sexual abuse, which renders home an unsafe place; the loss of a parent or close family member through death or separation, which can cause great anguish for a young person; psychiatric or psychological problems within the home may lead to intolerable living conditions; drug and alcohol abuse by the young person or others in the home, particularly a parent; criminal or anti-social behaviour leading to eviction from the home. (Forum on Youth Homelessness, 2000: 20)

Once homeless, children are faced with a limited number of options for progression off the streets. In terms of accommodation, many young homeless people find the traditional route into private rented accommodation blocked by increased rents. Emergency accommodation is temporary and, without a return to the family home, young homeless people are faced with limited accommodation options, with the result that many remain living on the street.

Some homeless children, therefore, inevitably turn to begging in order to survive, to pay for food, hostels or to fund drug/alcohol habits. As Coles and Craig observe in relation to the UK, 'when faced by the collapse – or blocking – of legitimate routes through youth transition young people do, therefore, develop their own survival strategies; begging ... is clearly one of those survival strategies' (Coles & Craig, in Dean, 1999: 74).

Summary

In summary, the young people the Leanbh service works with are generally either Travellers, Roma or homeless children. The social, economic and cultural backgrounds of these groups are diverse, but they have in common the experience of engaging in begging on the streets of Dublin.

In this report, the effectiveness of the Leanbh service in tackling child begging is evaluated, with consideration for the social and cultural conditions in which it occurs.

Content of Report

The report is comprised of seven chapters (including the present chapter, where the Leanbh service and its evaluation have been introduced). Chapter 2 contains an outline of the methodological, ethical and access issues involved in conducting the study. Chapter 3 provides a brief overview of the literature on child begging, and its practice and meaning within the

main groups targeted by Leanbh. This provides a context for evaluating the effectiveness and social relevance of the aims and aspirations of the service.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 contain the main findings of the evaluation. Chapter 4 describes and analyses the organisation and operation of the service, while Chapter 5 provides a profile of Leanbh's client group. Chapter 6 draws on material presented earlier to evaluate the Leanbh service in terms of its aims, delivery and impact. Finally, in Chapter 7, the conclusions of the evaluation are outlined, together with recommendations for the future.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

Methods of research

There were three elements to the methodology of this study. These were: (i) literature review, (ii) documentary analysis, and (iii) fieldwork.

Literature review

The objectives of the literature review were:

- (i) to analyse child begging as a practice, and its meaning within Traveller, Roma and Irish cultures, and
- (ii) to complete a review of Irish policy documents that have dealt with begging/child begging, and to explore the service responses that have emerged.

Documentary analysis

It was agreed that the statistics and records collected by the Leanbh project over the period since the programme started would be reviewed. These were to include:

- ♦ All data obtained by Leanbh relating to the clients engaged with since the beginning of the project;
- ♦ Breakdown of this data into relevant sub groups, e.g. male, female, age structure, ethnic origin, etc.;
- ♦ Breakdown of the nature of the begging activity, i.e. child on own, with friends, with family members, parents present, with/without parental consent, element of coercion, day or night, presenting reason for begging;
- ♦ Level of contact with children's parents, and nature of family work undertaken by the project;
- ♦ Statistics relating to the number of children identified as at risk, demographic information, and the number and nature of referrals made to statutory services;
- ♦ Documentation, referral letters, case files, etc., relating to the work undertaken, as well as all available documentation, policy statements, research, etc.;
- ♦ Documentation relating to the management of the service, budgets, accounts, sources of funding, etc.

Fieldwork

(i) Unstructured observation

The first phase of the fieldwork was informal in nature and designed to familiarise the researcher with the workings of the Leanbh service. Direct observation of the work of the staff and volunteers from Leanbh was undertaken to help give a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of the service. This included the following aspects of the service:

- ♦ Home visits and case work
- ♦ Street patrolling (staff and volunteers)
- ♦ Volunteer training
- ♦ Case review meetings
- ♦ Office administration and management

(ii) Semi-structured interviews

Seven sub-groups were identified for interviews (see Table 1). Groups 1-4 were interviewed informally on location at ISPCC and Leanbh premises. Interviews for Groups 5, 6 and 7 were formal, semi-structured and recorded, where possible. In the case of the volunteers, parents and children, a sample of interviewees was taken. Table 1 below gives the numbers of people interviewed in each sub-group.

Table 1: Interviews

Subgroups for interview	No. of interviews
1. ISPCC Head Office Staff	4
2. Management of Leanbh	2
3. Staff	2
4. Volunteers	3
5. Children	12
6. Parents	15
7. Other organisations	16
Total	54

Access and ethical issues

Accessing the client group and undertaking the interviews was identified as potentially difficult, due mainly to the nature of the service and people it engages with. Expected difficulties included:

- ♦ Language barriers with the non-national clients;
- ♦ Obtaining full consent – clients may be suspicious of the research and, in many cases, a lack of literacy skills might cause them to be wary of the consent form and letter;

- ♦ Clients might be unwilling to participate in the evaluation, as they may have a hostile reaction to the Leanbh service;
- ♦ Locating the clients, arranging appointments and suitable locations for interviews might be difficult for homeless clients and for some of the Travellers.

At the first advisory group meeting, it was agreed that parental consent would be obtained in writing prior to the interviews with children. This proved extremely difficult, however, as low literacy levels and suspicion from the client group meant that they were reluctant to take part in the study when asked to provide written consent. Following discussion at the second advisory group meeting, it was agreed to obtain verbal consent, which would be witnessed by one of the Leanbh staff who would also make the initial introduction to the family.

It is important to emphasise that the main focus of the ISPC's work is on the child, and that they are viewed as the primary clients of the service. However, it was agreed that it would probably be necessary to interview parents first, to build an understanding and rapport with them, before progressing to carrying out interviews with children. It was agreed that there would need to be a flexible approach to the interviews that would accommodate the needs of the individual families.

It was also agreed that it would be necessary to make very clear to participants that confidentiality was guaranteed and that their identity would be protected. The research team produced a simple clear letter for the parents that could be read to them by the researcher (Appendix 1). Children were asked for their consent to be interviewed, and the purpose of the evaluation was clearly explained.

The interviews with children and parents were conducted in their families' home environments where possible. For children being interviewed, a parent or guardian was nearby. It was necessary to be flexible in choosing an exact location, and to respect the different circumstances and accommodation arrangements for families.

The staff of the Leanbh service facilitated access to the clients. The relationships built up between the staff and the clients meant that the clients were less suspicious of the research and were able to put it into a context they understood.

The language barrier was overcome through the use of an interpreter. The primary researchers were experienced in working with both the Travelling community and the asylum seeker and refugee populations. This, combined with a flexible approach to the interviewing process, ensured that the fieldwork interviews were completed.

Research instruments

The key research questions as identified at the outset of the evaluation (see pages 2-3) formed the basis of the interview guides. These were subsequently broken down into more specific questions for the sub-groups, after the initial information gathering phase of the research. These questions are outlined in Table 2 over.

Table 2: Interview topics, by group

Group 1: <i>ISPC Head</i> <i>Office staff</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Background to the establishment of the Leanbh project ♦ The social conditions and the policy context in which Leanbh was established ♦ The rationale for each aim and the background philosophy that shaped the overall aims ♦ The vision behind the Leanbh programme and what it set out to achieve
Group 2: <i>Management</i> <i>of Leanbh</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Organisational structure and management of Leanbh ♦ Sources of funding, financial costs, accounting procedures and financial controls of the project ♦ The day-to-day management, training and support of the staff and volunteers of the project ♦ Opinions as to the impact of the service
Groups 3 & 4: <i>Staff and</i> <i>volunteers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Perceptions as to the aims of the project ♦ Opinions as to the impact of the service ♦ Opinions as to the day-to-day operation of the services ♦ Relationships with clients and other organisations
Groups 5 & 6: <i>Children and</i> <i>parents</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Direct feedback from the client group ♦ Perceptions of the causative factors for the original begging behaviour, e.g. alcohol abuse, homelessness, etc. ♦ Level of contact with statutory or voluntary services ♦ Process by which the clients came in contact with Leanbh ♦ Perceptions of the impact and quality of the service ♦ Views about interventions they found helpful/unhelpful ♦ Changes in begging behaviour, if any, following contact with Leanbh ♦ Perceptions of whether the interactions with Leanbh helped the underlying problems as presented earlier
Group 7: Other <i>organisations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Own approach to the issue of children begging ♦ Perceptions of the Leanbh project and its impact

Approach to sampling of clients

It was agreed at the first advisory meeting to decide the sampling approach following an analysis of the case files. On the basis of this analysis, it was agreed that a stratified random sample would be most appropriate. Factors taken into consideration in drawing the sample were:

- ♦ Geographical spread of clients around Dublin;
- ♦ Representative cover of age and sex of clients;
- ♦ Representative cover for clients of different ethnic origin;
- ♦ Coverage of clients currently working with a childhood support worker on an individual programme plan;
- ♦ Coverage of clients who have previously worked with a childhood support worker on an individual programme plan.

The sample aimed to include:

- ♦ Three families with current open case files;
- ♦ Three families with closed case files;
- ♦ Six families not currently engaged by the service. (In practice, it proved too difficult to locate and arrange interviews with this group and therefore only one interview fell into this category.)

Taking the above into consideration, a sample group of twenty clients was drawn. Initial discussion with the staff led to disqualification of four, as their whereabouts was currently unknown. There was also insufficient information about one of the clients to identify them. The Leanbh staff and researcher then attempted to visit the remaining fifteen families with a view to obtaining consent. Overall, this approach proved successful. However, locating the families and finding them at home did take a considerable amount of time and effort.

Table 3: Origins of families interviewed

3	Families from the Roma Community
	– 1 from the inner city
	– 2 from the Tallaght area
1	Settled family from Ballymun
6	Traveller families
	– 2 from the inner city
	– 1 from Finglas
	– 3 from Blanchardstown/Mulhuddart area

A breakdown of the interviews is included in the table overleaf.

Table 4: Breakdown of interviews

Sub-group	Persons Interviewed	Nos.
<i>ISPCC Head</i>	Chief Executive, Director of Services,	
<i>Office Staff:</i>	Financial Controller, Training and Development Officer	4
<i>Management of Leanbh:</i>	Current & previous Managers	2
<i>Staff and Volunteers:</i>	2 Childhood Support Workers and 3 volunteers (chosen randomly)	5
<i>Children:</i>	4 Roma children, 7 Traveller children 1 settled/homeless child	12
<i>Parents:</i>	5 Roma parents 9 Traveller parents 1 settled parent (10 families in total)	15
<i>Other organisations:</i>	<i>Gardaí</i> Pearse St Harcourt Terrace (telephone interview) Store Street	3
	<i>Eastern Region Health Authority</i> Senior Social Workers	5
	<i>Other Organisations</i> Dublin Corporation (Senior Social Worker) St. Columba's Travellers School Pavee Point Travellers Centre Exchange House Travellers Service Vincentian Refugee Centre (2 workers) Focus Ireland Blanchardstown Travellers Centre	8
	TOTAL	54

In summary, the approach to the methodology of this evaluation proved effective in relation to the aims of the study (outlined on page 2). Access difficulties were significant and arranging and completing the interviews with the client group proved to be very time consuming.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This section of the report will detail and examine the practice of child begging in Dublin, drawing on literature and research into the phenomenon both in Ireland and in the UK. It will also analyse the meaning of child begging within Traveller, Roma and Irish cultures, and review the responses to child begging from various statutory and voluntary agencies. The purpose of the literature review is to describe the practice of child begging in Dublin, in order to provide a context within which the Leanbh project can be understood and evaluated.

The extent of child begging in Dublin

Child begging is a phenomenon that is familiar to all who live and work in or visit Dublin. Children beg in a variety of ways and for a wide variety of reasons. This section of the literature review will examine literature relating to child begging as a practice, some of the motivations for child begging, and the extent and nature of child begging as a practice in Dublin.

There is a general shortage of documented research about child begging as an issue, both in terms of academic research and also in terms of attempts by relevant agencies and organisations to examine the phenomenon. This is surprising, given the topical and serious nature of child begging as an issue. It is therefore difficult to accurately detail the practice of child begging in Dublin city centre, and precise figures of the numbers of children begging in Dublin city centre are difficult to ascertain.

Barnardo's undertook research into the practice in October/November 1996, and observed approximately 58 children begging over a six-day period, the vast majority of whom were Travellers, with two refugees and three settled children also observed busking or begging (Barnardo's, 1996). The ISPCC conducted research in 1997, prior to the launch of the Leanbh service. The statistics released were based on observations in Dublin city centre from the 5th-21st September 1997. Leanbh recorded 150 sightings of children begging over a two-and-a-half week period, including children begging with a parent, two or more children begging together and also children begging alone. The Leanbh figures also suggest that the majority (86) of those children were Travellers, ten were 'settled', twenty-five were 'homeless' and two were 'foreign'. Leanbh was unsure of the profile of twenty-seven of the children sighted in the course of these observations (Leanbh, 1997).

A more recent picture of children begging in Dublin can be gathered from the current client profile of the Leanbh project. There are a total of 107 clients identified from the Leanbh case files, fifty-nine per cent (63) of whom are 'Travellers', twenty-six per cent (28) are 'foreign nationals' and fifteen per cent (16) are 'homeless/settled' (see Chapter 5 for further details). These figures present varying pictures of the extent of children begging in Dublin, and there is an obvious need for further, more detailed research into the phenomenon. However, each piece of research to date has highlighted three main populations as being involved in child begging in Dublin city centre: Traveller, Roma and homeless children.

Child begging as a practice

This section explores child begging as a practice in Dublin city centre, and the various ways in which these children beg. Barnardo's undertook research into the phenomenon of children begging in Dublin in 1996, and described the situation in Dublin at that time as follows:

Children begging on the streets is a daily occurrence with more at weekends. Most of the children are from the Travelling community and live in a variety of sites, some unserviced, around the city. The children arrive in the city on foot, by bus, or are dropped in by family or friends. During the day, the children tend to stay in one spot, unless moved on by the guards. The majority of them are noticeably neglected, vulnerable and sad. Some show obvious signs of withdrawal and hopelessness. The children tend not to seek shelter and are often exposed to intolerable conditions. At prearranged times the children assemble or are collected and they then go home. (Barnardo's, 1996: 1)

To a large extent, this description of the situation remains accurate today. As Williams comments, 'the assumption that children on the streets are all unsupported or have lost contact with family and home is inaccurate' (Williams, 1993: 833). Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that some children observed begging alone in Dublin are not actually completely alone on the street. 'Many of the smaller children begging are not alone – though they appear to be; cases that my team members have investigated have produced "minders" who are, in the main, older than the begging child' (correspondence between Travellers Team & Housing Welfare, Dublin Corporation, 1994). Most of the children begging on the streets of Dublin seem to have contact with home and, indeed, many appear to be begging with the permission of their parents.

This description of child begging appears more organised than the image of a child begging by the side of the road would initially suggest. Perhaps, then, child begging is viewed as an occupation or trade for the young child, as a way of earning additional cash. In her recent research into street begging in Dublin city centre, Howley discovered that, of those passers-by (and potential donors) surveyed, twenty-five per cent said that they would give to a young child begging alone as a first preference among beggars (Howley, 2000: 163). This would suggest that a child begging alone is likely to 'earn' more money than a child begging with a parent, or an adult begging alone.

In terms of the degree of involvement of the child's parents in the begging itself, 'quite a number deny the children are there in the city centre with their knowledge, and many feel that it's nobody's business but theirs as to what they do with their children' (correspondence between Travellers Team & Housing Welfare, Dublin Corporation, 1994). However, there is evidence to suggest that some parents of child beggars allow and even encourage their children to beg.

There is a presumption under this Bill (Children's Bill, 1999) that some parents encourage their children to beg. This was found to be true in my research, particularly among parents from the Travelling community. In this case, a system of organised begging exists, where young children were 'sent out' to beg by their parents at set times and with the intention of collecting a set amount of donations. (Howley, 2000: 216)

Howley also includes a description of the scheduling and organisation element of child begging among Traveller children in Dublin city centre.

During the field research, I spent some time begging with two young Traveller girls, Peg and Mary. Peg, the younger of the two, looked even younger than her twelve years of age. She explained their begging timetable: we beg every day, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday. All except Sunday. On Sunday we have to get dressed up and we all go to mass. (Howley, 2000: 111)

This 'timetable' implies an organised system of begging, with children organised to beg for a six-day week. Presumably, the extensive nature of the begging improves the 'earnings' of the children. This would suggest that begging is used to supplement incomes regularly, rather than just now and again. If this is the case, it has implications for the responses to child begging, as child begging is used as an important supplement to the household's weekly income rather than used when the household is facing a particular financial difficulty. This would imply that the households concerned are unable to survive on their existing incomes, be they incomes from social welfare or employment.

Another recent development in the area of child begging in Dublin is that begging as a practice appears to have diversified somewhat, with children becoming involved in other begging-related activities. These associated activities seem to be more likely to be perceived as an 'occupation' than begging would be. 'Some of them saw it as work, especially those who were "gigging" or busking. A great deal of concern was expressed in relation to the risk of physical injury to children running through lanes of traffic, washing car window screens, etc.' (Adhoc Group on Child Begging, 1997: 18). Based on research conducted into begging and related practices in the UK, Dean describes activities such as 'busking, *Big Issue* selling and unlicensed street trading – as a distinctive form of informal economic activity' (Dean, 1999: 1). Similarly, in Dublin city centre, children can be observed washing car windows, singing and busking, in addition to the more 'traditional' methods of begging.

Such variations in the practice of begging in Dublin again highlight the fact that, in all its guises, it is a complex issue, and, therefore, any responses must address the multi-causal nature of child begging, rather than simply focus on the begging itself. Although there are

many discussions and complaints about child begging as a practice, whether it is by young homeless people, Roma or Travellers, the issue of the daily living conditions of these same children rarely makes the headlines. 'We don't see the deprivation that this child will return to. It is a classic case of out of sight, out of mind' (*Irish Times*, Opinion, 4.10.1997). The importance of placing the begging in context was emphasised in a number of media articles about child begging. Pádraig Ó'Móráin reported on one Traveller organisation whose representative 'criticised the perspective which saw Traveller children begging as an issue which had to be dealt with while ignoring the conditions the children lived in on sites' (*Irish Times*, 3.10.1997). This highlights again the importance of context when seeking to understand the practice of child begging. Simply problematising the child begging itself, without examining the rationale within the context of the lived circumstances of the child, will ultimately fail to prevent further begging, as it does not address or solve the underlying causes for the begging.

Media coverage of child begging has been critical of both public indifference and State inaction to the practice of child begging:

Since everyone who uses O'Connell Bridge knows where children are put out begging, this behaviour is, it seems fair to assume, being tolerated. It would also be fair to assume that if an *Irish Times* reader was to put his or her five-year-old out begging on his own on O'Connell Bridge and left him to make his own way through dangerous traffic, that parent would be in a great deal of trouble with the Garda and the Eastern Health Board very fast. Why does this child deserve less? (Pádraig Ó'Móráin, *Irish Times*, 1.5.1997)

This perceived difference in the treatment of 'settled' and Traveller children is important to examine in ascertaining whether there is a degree of statutory acceptance of and public indifference to the phenomenon, simply because the overwhelming majority of child beggars are Travellers. In his discussion on youth homelessness and child protection in Ireland, McVerry also highlighted a difference between the State's apparent willingness to protect Traveller and settled children, arguing that the 'health board need to sit down and, having decided that these children deserve the same care and protection as settled children, assess and plan the facilities needed' (1997).

An adhoc group of professionals was formed in 1990 to examine the problem of child begging. The group included representatives from the Dublin Corporation Traveller Team and Housing Welfare Section, the Gardaí, the Health Board and a number of Traveller groups. The group discussed the idea of discouraging the practice of child begging and suggested one preventative measure, which was to dissuade people from donating to children begging.

The public should not give money to persons begging, but should redirect financial and other support to the various agencies who provide support services for these vulnerable families. If there is no reward for effort, then one could assume that such effort will be reduced. (Adhoc Group on Child Begging, 1992: 4)

However, although this may reduce the numbers of children begging on the streets (by reducing the income to be procured from the practice), the Adhoc Group also recognised the need to establish and address the root causes of the begging.

The meaning of begging within Roma and Traveller communities

This section of the literature review considers the meaning of begging, particularly child begging, within Roma and Traveller communities. Literature specifically addressing the meaning of begging within any culture is scarce, but the following is an attempt to gain an insight into the motivations and attitudes towards child begging as a practice within both Roma and Traveller communities.

Fonseca describes the interaction between the Gypsy and non-Gypsy (*gadje*) in the act of begging:

Gypsies laugh at the *gadje* who turn moist eyes on them, but they are happy to take their money. Certainly some beggars need to beg, but for many, especially among children, it is a sideline, a chance to pick up a little pocket money and simultaneously confirm one's proud isolation from the white donor. This attitude – though not necessarily the begging – is widely encouraged by adult gypsies, who are understandably anxious that their children should neither mix with *gadje* nor be thin-skinned. (Fonseca, 1995: 50-1)

Child begging sees the Roma child come into direct contact (and sometimes conflict) with the majority population, but it appears also to play a part in maintaining the boundaries between the two groups, and in socialising children into the group identity.

All in all, in any interaction with non-Gypsies, at home or abroad, they live in tense anticipation of ill-will, bad faith, rejection and harm. If children are toughened by what they see, their parents may feel that this is appropriate training for an expected lifetime of hate directed towards them. (Fonseca, *The Guardian*, 2000)

The practice of child begging within both the Roma and Traveller communities can be understood from a cultural point of view, but also with reference to the socio-economic circumstances of the two minority groups. The motivation for child begging as a practice may be a cultural one, but it may equally be a reflection of financial difficulties or social problems experienced by individual households.

Fonseca outlines one cultural difference which may explain a motivation for begging as a practice by both women and children within the Roma community. She explains that Gypsy women, whatever the earnings of their husbands, are ultimately charged with supporting and feeding their children (Fonseca, 2000). This would imply that begging is used as a means to supplement the household's income. McCarthy (1994) details a similar situation within the Travelling community, whereby

Traveller women and children, too, have always had an economic role, including begging, dealing, fortune telling, etc. Travellers pride themselves on their ability to survive in circumstances that settled people could not survive in and to find ways of making a living in the most difficult environments. (McCarthy, 1994: 124)

This description would again point to the fact that begging was used by women and children as a means of supplementing income on a regular basis, that it is seen as a legitimate occupation by this minority of households. The *Irish Times* also sought to understand the reasons that certain Traveller households used child begging to supplement their incomes.

Why do they send their children to beg? Pavée Point suggests that there are a variety of reasons. Some beg because their parents need money for drink, some because the family may be in the grip of moneylenders, some because a crisis has left the family short of money for essentials; others see begging as a business. (*Irish Times*, 'Opinion', 4.10.1997)

The financial circumstances of the household therefore have obvious implications for the use of child begging. Whether the income is used as a regular means of supplementing inadequate incomes, or for covering occasional expenses, is important in developing responses that address child begging, and the poverty traps which cause it, in a holistic manner. Begging may be a custom, a traditional means of survival in difficult circumstances, or a way to supplement incomes. The reasons and motivations behind the practice of child begging are complex and defy over-generalisations on either cultural or economic grounds.

Although individual Roma or Traveller households involved in child begging may view it as a legitimate economic activity, the majority of Traveller and Roma households do not engage in child begging activity. This poses a complex set of questions – what differentiates these Roma and Traveller households from others, perhaps in similar financial circumstances, who do not engage in begging activities? and why is the practice of begging, even to supplement inadequate incomes, seen as totally unacceptable by the majority society? In his article about the Roma, Sampson details one reason why customs such as begging conflict with the majority society:

Their tradition of begging with their children and assuming an obligation to charity is now out of keeping with the western spirit of self reliance and commercial competition. (Sampson, *The Guardian*, 2000)

In the UK, Dean also examines the reasons for society's current distaste for the (ancient) practice of begging by highlighting the solutions that low income households might find for financial difficulties:

... it would seem that begging as a means of survival has been constituted as an activity that is beyond the pale of acceptability. Recent research among low-income families asked what approaches they might adopt to maximise income when money was short (Kempson *et al.*, 1994). In the 'hierarchy' of favoured approaches this revealed, obtaining better paid (and legitimate) employment was regarded as the best solution, while petty crime was cited as a last resort: begging was so unacceptable that it did not appear on the list at all. (Dean, 1999: 3)

This would suggest that, although the decision to beg may be taken with primarily financial circumstances in mind, other households in similar circumstances would not consider the option of begging to supplement their household income. This would imply that the motivations are more individual than perhaps was previously believed. There is, for example, only a minority of the Travelling community involved in child begging, and most members of the Travelling community are strong in their condemnation of this practice, and do not identify it as a part of their cultural heritage. In addressing the issue of child begging, there is therefore a need to examine the factors that distinguish those households whose members engage in child begging from others in similar circumstances. The *Irish Times* highlighted the need for

genuine consultation with all households involved in child begging in order to resolve such contradictions:

That a small minority defy the disapproval of their own community suggests that persuading them to give up street begging may be a difficult task. This, surely, is a task which can only succeed with the involvement, at every level, of members of the Travelling community. (*Irish Times*, 'Opinion', 4.10.1997)

Social conditions

As was mentioned in the previous section, there are a number of reasons and motivations for child begging in both Roma and Traveller communities. One major reason is the need to supplement incomes and this is now examined in greater detail. In recognition of the fact that 'begging is a symptom of wider social problems, rather than an actual problem in itself' (correspondence between Travellers Team and Dublin Corporation, 1994), the wider social and economic conditions of both Roma and Travellers in Ireland will now be examined as a contextual framework within which to understand begging.

Begging is a symptom or indication of families/children who may experience problems on a general basis, i.e. alcoholism, spouse battering, drug abuse, inadequate parenting, child abuse, etc. Our attention is directed to dealing with these problems, rather than total attention being given to the issue of 'begging'. (Adhoc Group on Child Begging, 1992: 1)

The Irish National Co-ordinating Committee for the European Year Against Racism reported on the living conditions of Roma, Travellers and Gypsies throughout Europe. 'Racism against Roma, Gypsies, Travellers is not only manifested in the widespread acceptance of negative images and stereotypes used to legitimate their social exclusion but also in the living conditions they endure in virtually all countries' (Irish National Co-ordinating Committee for the European Year Against Racism, 1998: 8). In terms of the situation of the Travelling community in Ireland, the description of their living conditions in the introduction is testament to their marginalised socio-economic position within Irish society. The Adhoc Group on Child Begging attempted to address child begging within the context of the social and economic situation of the Travelling community in Ireland at that time. Their main objective was:

... to examine and explore various ways of positive intervention in this particular problem, i.e. that these children and young people would have some alternatives offered to them, other than falling into what has become a 'folkway' for some of the Travelling People – begging and soliciting alms from the perceived better off population. (Adhoc Group on Child Begging, 1992: 1)

Above all, although their main brief was to examine the issue of child begging in Dublin, there was a recognition of the underlying issue: 'the provision of basic amenities and facilities for the Travelling families, i.e. sites, houses, etc., must fall into line, otherwise no amount of social work/youth work/community work will enable this system to change' (Adhoc Group on Child Begging, 1992: 4). Their view was that, without addressing the underlying inequalities

that discriminate against Traveller households and Traveller children, a solution to the practice of child begging would not be found.

The situation of the Roma community is more difficult to ascertain, as they have only been living in Ireland for a relatively short length of time. However, the situation of Roma asylum seekers elsewhere in Europe is detailed by the European Committee on Migration (CDMG).

With asylum applications rejected, and public opinion and legislation turning against them, the feeling of lack of confidence in authorities, lack of protection and vulnerability replicates itself as well ... Individual applicants are confronted with a choice between coming to terms with a long-term clandestine existence, and turning to an attitude of non-cooperation-in-principle with the majority or *gadje* population. (European Committee on Migration, 15.12.1999)

Another possible explanation for the practice of child begging within the Roma asylum seeking community is the asylum system itself, whereby 'cuts in the benefits offered to asylum seekers have led to begging and petty theft as an everyday survival strategy on the part of thousands of Roma, often children, on the streets of most large Western European cities' (CDMG, 1999). The adequacy of welfare benefits to meet the basic needs of asylum seekers is an issue that needs to be considered in Ireland, particularly in relation to the newly introduced system of direct provision.

The majority of Roma, as asylum seekers in Ireland, are 'expecting deportation, they have nothing to lose' (Fonseca, *The Guardian*, 2000). There is little motivation to abide by Irish laws or the legal system when there is an expectation of deportation. With a readmission agreement in place between the Irish and Romanian governments, the expectation for many is for the rejection of asylum claims and the possibility of deportation. The fact that begging is an illegal practice and is disapproved of by the State and the majority population is of little consequence to people living in such insecure circumstances, with little stake in either the country or society in which they are residing. There is a need for more research into the circumstances of this insecure and marginalised group within Irish society, in an attempt to address their motivation for child begging.

Government responses to child begging

The Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community (1995) went into considerable detail about the phenomenon of child begging by children of the Travelling community, and also the roles and responsibilities of the legislators, statutory agencies and the general public in dealing with children begging. The risks posed to children were outlined as follows:

- 5.3: Children who beg are exposed to various serious dangers. They are at risk of abduction and abuse. They are out on the street in all sorts of weather, subject to verbal abuse and conflict. In addition, children placed on the streets are exposed to influences such as drug abuse and prostitution. These children may

be regarded as abandoned and neglected for the duration of the day's begging. The general public should not provide money to children who beg, but should re-direct financial and other support to the main agencies which assist vulnerable families. (Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community, 1995: 51)

The report continues to highlight the inability of the 1908 Children's Act, the Child Care Act (1991) or the various School Attendance Acts to specifically provide protection for child beggars.

- 5.5: The Child Care Act (1991) does not specifically legislate for this problem. The School Attendance Act, while in effect limiting begging times, cannot in itself resolve the problem of child begging. (Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community, 1995: 51)

The Report went on to detail a number of recommendations for the relevant statutory agencies in relation to Traveller children begging, and these are quoted here:

- ER.26: Adequate support facilities, including day care centres for children involved in begging, should be provided by the relevant statutory authorities.
- ER.27: Where the problem of child begging exists, an Outreach Worker should be appointed in major urban areas by the relevant statutory authorities, to work with vulnerable Traveller children and their families, in conjunction with the social work teams already in place. Adequate resources should be provided by the relevant statutory authorities for this purpose.
- ER.28: ... should be updated to a level where the penalties are an effective deterrent, including the power to confiscate any monies proven to be procured from such activity.
- ER.29: The relevant provisions of the Child Care Act 1991 should be implemented to assist the relevant statutory authorities in removing children involved in begging to a suitable place. (Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community, 1995: 52)

Some of these recommendations are still being echoed by the Adhoc Group on Child Begging. The Adhoc Group has been meeting since 1990 to discuss the practice of child begging in Dublin. They draw attention to the fact that many of the children begging 'are from multi-problem families – families where begging is a customary way to supplement income and/or social welfare' (minutes). They highlight the importance of placing 'begging' in the context of the life and circumstances of the child and their family and, without an examination of the context within which the begging occurs, i.e. the child's family background, the 'begging' itself will never be properly addressed. They also highlight the fact that:

... there is a particular grouping of children/young people amongst the Travellers who are not being reached by existing services (Adhoc Group on Child Begging, 1992: 2)

and that, without addressing these 'gaps' in current service provision, and without addressing the wider issues of deprivation and poverty within the Travelling community, the issue of begging will not be solved. This view, that child begging is simply an indicator of a range of other difficulties in the life of the child or his/her family, allows the issue to be placed in context and allows each of the wider issues to be addressed, rather than simply the begging. Their basic recommendation is that

... 'begging' is a symptom of wider social problems rather than an actual problem in itself. If there was a positive commitment to the employment of an 'Outreach Worker' – a constructive and preventative programme regarding this problem could be initiated. (Dublin Corporation, 1994, correspondence between Travellers Team & Housing Welfare)

The first report on Ireland and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1996) discussed the practice of child begging in Dublin:

The problem of children begging relates mainly to the Dublin city centre area and primarily involves children of the Travelling community. The number of children involved is generally small but can vary depending on the time of year, with Christmas and the summer holidays being the peak periods. The children come from a small number of families. While it is a criminal offence for parents to send their children to beg, the Gardaí face considerable difficulties in taking prosecutions because of the need to prove that the parents sent the children out to beg. The need to strengthen the law in this regard is being examined in the context of the preparation of legislation to replace the Children Act, 1908. (Department of Foreign Affairs, 1996)

This flaw in the existing legislation has been addressed in the recent *Children Bill* (1999). This Bill outlines the future provision for the protection of children involved in begging, placing the responsibility for both the child and the begging on the parent or guardian of that child,

A person is guilty of an offence if he or she causes or procures a child or, having the custody, charge or care of a child, allows the child to be in any street or public place, or to make house to house visits, for the purpose of begging or receiving alms or of inducing the giving of alms (whether or not there is any pretence of singing, playing, performing, offering anything for sale or otherwise). (*Children Bill*, S.12, 247: 1)

There is also a change in the treatment of the parents/guardians of the child in this Bill, as the onus is now on them to prove that they did not send the child out to beg, rather than on the State to prove that they did. Once identified, 'the person shall be presumed to have allowed the child to be in the street, public place or house for that purpose, unless the contrary is proved' (*Children Bill*, S.12, 247: 2). There is also provision, under this Bill, for the parent/guardian of the child found begging to be 'liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding (a) in the case of a first offence £250, or (b) in the case of a second or subsequent offence, £500' (*Children Bill*, S.12, 247: 3).

It would appear that the legislation is beginning to catch up with current practices and methods of child begging in Dublin city centre, recognising the different forms of child begging

and child exploitation, and seeking to address these issues in a comprehensive manner, by placing responsibility for the child's actions firmly with his/her parent or guardian.

At an international level, child begging in Ireland has been recognised as an important issue. A query came from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights who, on the 15th January 1998, requested information of the Irish Delegation, asking what steps had been taken to combat begging by Traveller children. The response of the Irish Government was as follows:

The Law Reform Commission had recommended that the offence should be retained but that the presumption should be amended so that the onus would be on the parents to show that they had not sent the child out to beg. The Children Bill, 1996, also proposed changes in the law in that area. New legislation could not provide a complete solution, however, for begging by children was part of a wider social problem and only a minority of the children of Traveller families were involved in begging. An NGO programme had recently been launched to assist the children engaged in begging under which outreach workers encouraged the children to avail themselves of the services available. NGOs and the Health Boards were working together to try to improve the situation. (UNHCHR website, <http://www.unhcr.ch>, 15.1.1998)

The Report of the Forum on Youth Homelessness highlighted one response to the practice of begging by children and young people who are homeless:

One of the most visible breaches of the law by young homeless people is that of begging. Some people with whom we spoke, including young people who had been arrested or imprisoned for this offence, argued that it was neither serious nor criminal; that it was, for the most part, a last resort and was a preferable option to stealing. (Forum on Youth Homelessness, 2000: 47)

The begging practices of young homeless people need to be addressed in a more comprehensive manner, i.e. the homeless status of the child/young person begging needs to be addressed with the same immediacy as the 'begging' itself.

Practical responses to child begging

Despite the statutory responses to the issue of child begging detailed above, there remains some confusion on the ground about which agencies ultimately have a responsibility towards these children. As McVerry argued in 1997, 'The Gardaí say it is a problem for the health board, the health board say they do not have the power to compel these children to stay anywhere. The result is that nobody does anything. The victims are the children'. Leanbh maintains that 'Statutory Agencies such as the Health Boards and the Gardaí have a clear duty to protect begging children under the Child Care Act 1991, various School Attendance Acts and the proposed new Children Bill 1996' (Leanbh literature), but that these agencies are not providing adequate care or support for children found begging.

The Adhoc Group on Children Begging provides a chilling reminder of the seriousness of the problem and the importance of intervention in the issue of children begging.

Many of the children surveyed over the past 15 years are either dead or in prison. Certainly it would have been our experience that the children surveyed in 1982 for instance had extremely hard lives with little or no standards of living. (correspondence between the Department of the Environment and Travellers Team of Dublin Corporation, 1997)

In 1996, the Eastern Health Board provided funding for an additional social worker post at one of the Travellers organisations in Dublin called Exchange House. Exchange House had been providing services to the more vulnerable section of the Travelling community in Dublin on behalf of the Eastern Health Board since 1980. Part of the responsibilities of this social worker was to specifically work with the families involved in begging, and to address the issue through co-ordination of services and long term case work, where appropriate, with the families involved. This social worker subsequently took over the chair of the Adhoc Group and is liaising with the children and families section of the Health Board on matters relating to child begging on an ongoing basis. The manager of the Leanbh service joined the Adhoc Group in 1998.

The ISPCC Leanbh project is the only specific service response established to target the children begging in Dublin to date.

The ISPCC is convinced that new laws will only be effective if the problem of begging is addressed by focusing on the needs of individual children found begging and the responsibility of parents and the State to meet those needs. There are many different levels at which begging children are deprived of their rights. These include health, education, protection and basic human dignity. Efforts to protect such children must be clearly framed against a belief in the equal rights of all children to be safe and well cared for. (ISPCC: Leanbh 'Protecting Children Begging' leaflet)

The Leanbh project has emerged as a voluntary sector response to the issue of child begging. Leanbh has taken a proactive lead in bringing the issue of child begging to the fore, despite the fact that the legislative framework to adequately address child begging is still not in place.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it would appear that the issue of child begging, though frequently arousing heated and topical debates, is an issue that has remained very much neglected in terms of in-depth research into either the extent of or motivation for child begging. There is need for research to be undertaken by either the statutory or voluntary agencies currently developing responses to the practice of child begging, as it is vital, in planning a response, that they fully understand the reasons for the begging. There is also a need to examine the needs and

circumstances of those Traveller, Roma and homeless children who beg and to ensure that the relevant statutory and voluntary agencies co-operate to address their needs in a coherent fashion.

The work of the Adhoc Group on Child Begging has attempted to co-ordinate the efforts of the different agencies working on the ground. The Children Bill (1999) addresses the issue of responsibility for child begging, and there is a need to ensure that the relevant statutory agencies make use of this legislation when it is in place. Within this context, the Leanbh project was established to specifically target the children who are begging on the streets.

CHAPTER 4: THE LEANBH SERVICE

Introduction

This chapter examines the Leanbh service in detail. It describes all of the various aspects of the background, establishment, management, staffing and operation of the service, and discusses the key features in each of these areas.

Background to the Leanbh service

The ISPCC has had concern for the needs of children begging in Dublin since early in 1993. Three pieces of preliminary research were undertaken by the ISPCC to explore the problem. This research involved placing workers on the streets of Dublin to establish the number of children begging, and to refer these to the child protection services. The ISPCC concluded from the research that most of the children who beg were Travellers. They also found some Romanian adults with infants begging. The research found that:

- ♦ the average number of children begging per week was forty, increasing over the Christmas period;
- ♦ there were different patterns noted in begging behaviour, ranging from a child begging alone to playing a musical instrument or singing;
- ♦ the children were being coerced into begging by a parent/parents;
- ♦ the response of the child protection services was 'inconsistent and ineffective.'

The statistics collected highlighted the numbers of incidents of begging observed by the Leanbh staff over fixed periods. The research undertaken in September 1997 gave the following profile and groupings of children seen begging during a two-week period in Dublin:

Table 5: ISPCC research findings on child begging

	Travellers	Settled	Homeless	Foreign	Unsure	Total
Parent with child	17	1	1	2	2	23
Two or more	27	2	-	-	5	34
Alone	42	7	24	-	20	93
Totals	86	10	25	2	27	150

In the light of the above, the ISPCC identified child begging as a serious child protection issue, mainly because:

- ♦ Children do not wish to be out begging, but are being forced to do so;
- ♦ The children are not experiencing normal childhood activities;
- ♦ The children's education is suffering;
- ♦ On the streets they are vulnerable to emotional, physical and sexual abuse;
- ♦ Begging is damaging to the child's self-esteem and sense of self-worth.

The establishment of Leanbh

A private individual, who shared the ISPCC's concern about the children begging, approached the organisation, offering to financially support a programme run by the ISPCC that would tackle this problem. The Leanbh project was subsequently established, as a three-year pilot programme, in October 1997. The project started with a Project Manager, two childhood support workers and a number of volunteers.

The aims of the service, as outlined in Leanbh policy documentation, were to:

1. Actively monitor the presence of begging children on the streets;
2. Immediately link the children found begging with appropriate statutory services;
3. Identify and work with the parents of such children to encourage a better understanding of children's needs and parental responsibility;
4. Engage in parental and public education with a view toward changing societal ambivalence towards, and parental acceptance of, this form of child exploitation;
5. Provide therapeutic interventions to children who beg, and co-work with parents to achieve these aims.

The project began by identifying and adopting three strategies:

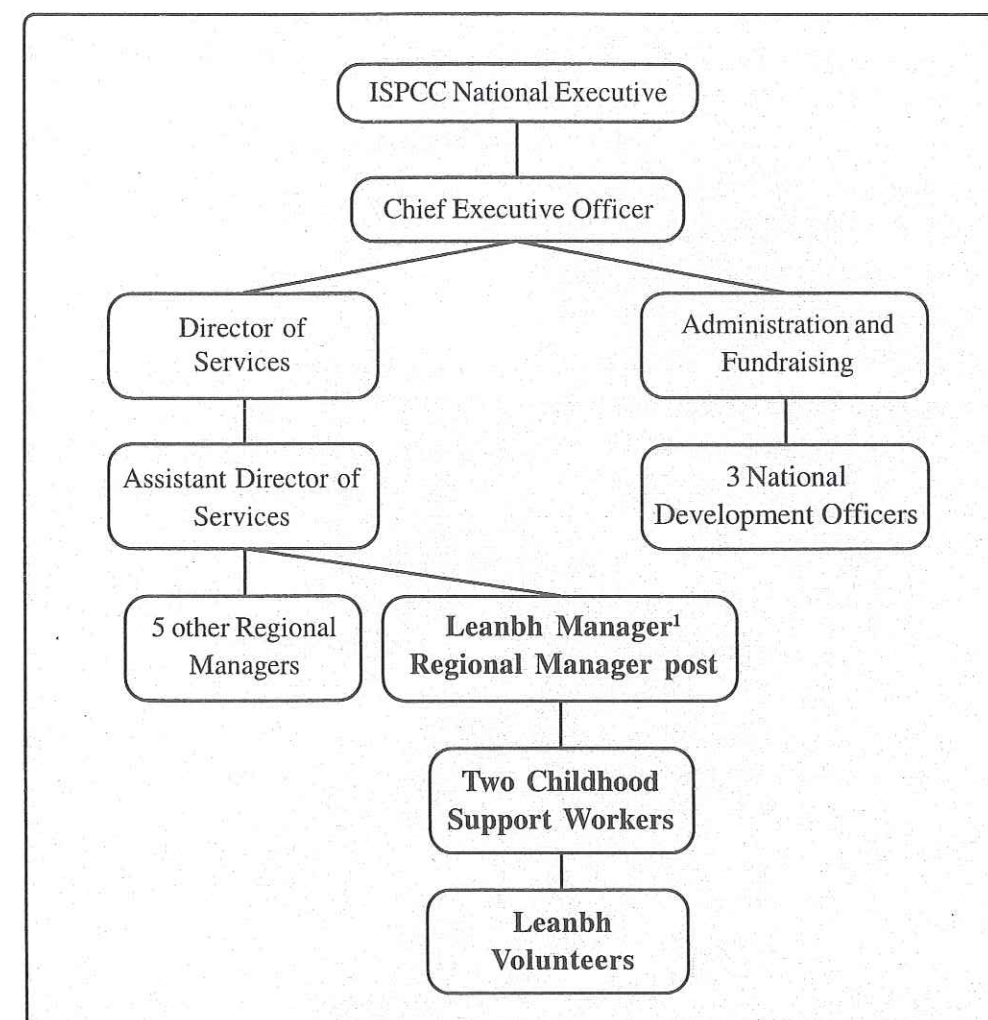
- ♦ An outreach or engagement component, including locating, interacting, and engaging young people who are begging on the streets, and linking them into the child protection and Gardaí services. In practice, this involves patrolling the streets, attempting to engage the children and making subsequent referrals. Leanbh policy is to regard every incident of child begging as a child protection issue.
- ♦ An intervention and educational component, working with young people who are begging, to increase their personal awareness of the risks of being on the street, the disadvantages of not attending school, and the exploitative nature of the activity they are involved in.
- ♦ A family intervention component, working with the parents of the children found begging, to highlight and educate them as to the exploitative and damaging nature of the activity, to address the deficits in the parent/child relationship which have resulted in the child being placed on the street to beg, and to network them into other necessary therapeutic support services.

Premises

The service has an administrative office in South William Street in Dublin, where staff files, case notes, etc., are kept. The Leanbh staff and volunteers use this office. There is also a small premises on Bride Street where children can be brought for face-to-face work, and for group work and activities. Staff have the use of the meeting room at the ISPCC head office in Molesworth Street for meetings, case reviews and training sessions with the volunteers, when required.

Management

The overall management structure of Leanbh within the ISPCC is described in the diagram below. The manager's role centres around the induction, supervision, deployment, support and training of the two childhood support workers.



¹. The manager appointed in October 1997 left the organisation in October 1999 and the Assistant Director of Services has been acting manager on an interim basis.

Financial management of Leanbh

The financial management of the Leanbh project is centralised through the ISPCC's financial controller. As such, the manager of Leanbh has no responsibility for dealing with financial matters, creditors, salaries, etc. However, all expenses incurred by the project are signed off by the manager prior to payment by the ISPCC's financial controller, and the project operates a small petty cash float (£100) for office incidentals. (See Appendix 2 for breakdown of income and expenditure for 1998, 1999 and 2000.)

All of the funds for the Leanbh project, to date, have come through fundraising and a special appeal championed by one high profile businessman. The fund is restricted for use by the Leanbh project only. The project has one current bank account and only direct expenses related to the Leanbh project are made through this account. Secondary expenses, such as administration and management facilities, are met by the ISPCC from its general funds.

Staff

The staff in Leanbh includes the manager and two childhood support workers. The childhood support workers each carry a caseload of 8-10 children. These cases involve children who have been identified as being particularly at risk, and who have been sufficiently engaged by the staff to the point where more in-depth work can take place. The childhood support worker initially completes a comprehensive assessment form in respect of the child. On the basis of this assessment, the needs and strengths of the child are identified, leading to the formulation of specific goals and the development of an Individual Programme Plan (IPP). Individual casework is focused on the IPP and is for a limited time period. On average, the childhood support worker will meet with each of these clients once a week. The duration of the work with each child will be reviewed with the manager in supervision on an ongoing basis.

The staff are also responsible for the recruitment, induction, training, deployment and supervision of the volunteers (see next section). When there is not enough volunteer cover, the childhood support workers patrol the streets and make referrals, etc. Other duties include court appearances, liaison with other services, organising case meetings with other professionals and linking with the Health Board and the Gardaí. One of the workers has been trained as a Guardian ad Litem and is currently guardian for one 14-year-old boy.

Volunteers

There are currently twenty-four Leanbh volunteers. Volunteers are recruited through national advertisements two to three times per year, talks on local radio stations, church appeals and parish newsletters, and leaflets and posters displayed locally. Interested individuals are sent information on all four of the ISPCC's projects, and are invited to attend for a group interview

and to fill out a detailed application form. They are then invited back for a structured individual interview. After these steps, potential volunteers are invited for training. Before working as a volunteer, they must:

- ♦ provide proof of identity;
- ♦ produce proof of Garda clearance;
- ♦ sign a confidentiality statement;
- ♦ sign the ISPCC volunteer agreement;
- ♦ obtain an ISPCC identification card.

The training consists of three induction sessions with the project manager, and fifteen structured three-hour sessions run by the childhood support workers. The content of these sessions is as follows:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Introduction | 9. Child abuse |
| 2. Active listening 1:
<i>Understanding children's needs</i> | 10. Engagement skills |
| 3. Active listening 2:
<i>Reflective skills</i> | 11. Loss |
| 4. The child and the school | 12. Group work and outreach skills |
| 5. The child and the family | 13. Children's rights/laws and legislation |
| 6. Challenging and confronting | 14. Valuing childhood/the agency wide response |
| 7. Sexuality | 15. Case management/summary |
| 8. Exploring options | |

Each session has a detailed format for the instructor to follow. There is a time schedule for the session, with a list of what practical things will be needed for the session and what the learning objectives for the students are. The sessions are practical and well structured, with lots of exercises and role-play which help engage the trainees actively in the programme.

During the training period, the volunteer must observe one of the staff covering street patrol for at least three sessions (this process is known as shadowing). The volunteer will then undertake three sessions on the street where they are observed by the staff. At the end of this process, if the staff and management are satisfied that the applicant is suitable, they will be invited to become a Leanbh volunteer.

The operation of the service

The Leanbh service operates mainly out of Dublin (with some services being offered to children who beg in Cork also). The main services provided by the staff and volunteers in Dublin are as follows:

Street patrolling

This involves four-hour shifts for staff and/or volunteers, walking the streets and covering specified areas, to monitor and engage with children begging. Leanbh policy documentation emphasises three key guidelines for staff and volunteers when engaging children on the streets:

1. Approach the child in a non-threatening manner. Introduce yourself and the Leanbh service.
2. Explain the concerns that Leanbh would have in relation to the child being out on their own, not being in school, missing out on play time and having responsibility for making money, etc.
3. Explain that, as a result of the above concerns, Leanbh will be informing the Gardaí and the Social Workers.

The service covers the streets in this way with a minimum of three shifts per day. The service is aiming to provide full 24-hour cover for the streets. In order to do this, they would need an estimated fifty volunteers, working two at a time.

Referrals

Leanbh policy is to regard every incident of child begging as a child protection issue. In line with this, the staff and volunteers, having seen a child or number of children, will contact the Gardaí in the local police station and refer the sighting to the relevant health board area social workers. In the period 1997/98, Leanbh made 2,872 referrals to the Eastern Health Board.

Case work

Leanbh childhood support workers each undertake casework with children who have been identified as at risk and who have been engaged with to the extent that case work is possible. The workers currently have nineteen open cases between them and the service has twenty-eight cases that have been closed. Following a detailed assessment, which focuses on the child, parents, other significant adults and all relevant environmental factors, an Individual Programme Plan is agreed with the client. This plan addresses agreed specific needs over a defined period of time. The plan will attempt to build on the strengths of children and parents, and recognises that, in reality, change may be slow and difficult.

Groupwork

The childhood support workers run approximately four preventative groups per year for the children and for the parents. In the last twelve months, two of these groups were for children on building self-esteem, one was on parenting for adults and there was also a swimming group for the children. These groups are usually for an identified number of children or

parents who have similar needs. They operate on a weekly basis for a fixed period of time of 6-8 weeks (except the swimming group, which ran for approximately one year, due to its popularity).

Key features of the Leanbh service*Management of Leanbh*

The Leanbh project is well managed and structured. Roles and responsibilities are clearly identified and there is a strong emphasis on individual accountability, balanced by formal and regular supervision sessions with the line manager. The central control of finances was described as a positive feature of the service by the managers, enabling them to concentrate on service provision and staff support and management.

Staff

The staff in Leanbh are committed and professional in their approach to the work. They have good social skills, as is obvious from their interactions with the client group, and are well organised in all aspects of their work. The team is committed to the principles and ethos of the ISPCC and believes strongly in the aims and work of the Leanbh project.

Volunteers

The commitment of the volunteers is a major asset to Leanbh. The volunteers' ability to provide such comprehensive on-the-street presence is a significant feature of the service. The level of support and supervision being provided by the staff for the volunteers is impressive, and the morale within the present group of volunteers appears very high. Following a difficult period in the organisation's history, the ISPCC's National Executive established a Commission on Service Volunteers in February 1999. This commission examined all aspects of the volunteer's role through a consultative process, where they invited verbal and written submissions from all current and past volunteers. The report, published in May 1999, made detailed and specific recommendations, which the current group of Leanbh volunteers are obviously benefiting from.

Volunteer training

The training programme was completely overhauled for this group of volunteers. The changes reflected the criticisms of the first group, who felt that they were not adequately prepared for the work and that too much was being asked of them. The new training programme outlined above would seem to provide a more relevant and specialised preparation process for the Leanbh volunteers, and these improvements are reflected positively in the feedback from the interviews undertaken with the current team of volunteers.

Street presence

The emphasis on street work and the high presence of the staff and volunteers on the streets are unique features of the service. The process involved in making direct contact with the children on the streets and engaging them positively is central to Leanbh's approach.

Engaging the Roma Community

Increasing numbers of Roma families are being seen on the streets. The Leanbh team has made significant progress in engaging members of the Roma community, and building on this progress is undoubtedly going to be a major factor in the future of the service.

In summary, Leanbh is a well organised and focused service. Clear aims and objectives have been translated into practical policies and procedures, to which staff and volunteers refer regularly. Strong emphasis is put on supervision, and an excellent support structure for staff and volunteers allows them to maintain focus on the aims of the service and the implementation of Leanbh's policies.

CHAPTER 5: THE LEANBH CLIENT GROUP

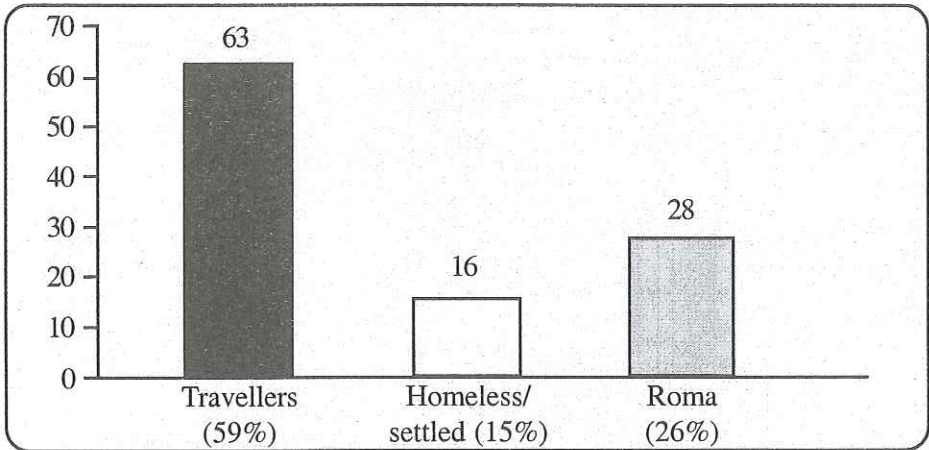
The identified aims of Leanbh, as outlined earlier, provide a clear focus for the work of the service. This focus is centred around the children who are begging on the streets of Dublin, either with their parents or on their own. Analysis of the case files of the Leanbh service indicates that files have been opened on 107 children in total since the service began in 1997.

This number includes any child who is engaged by the Leanbh service to the point where some relevant information is gathered. There are three main groups or sub sets within the population of children Leanbh has engaged on the streets. These are:

- 1. Travelling community – 63 children
- 2. Settled or majority indigenous Irish population (often homeless) – 16 children
- 3. Roma community – 28 children

Figure 1 below outlines the breakdown in terms of the numbers of children from each group and gives their percentage of the overall population of children engaged by the service.

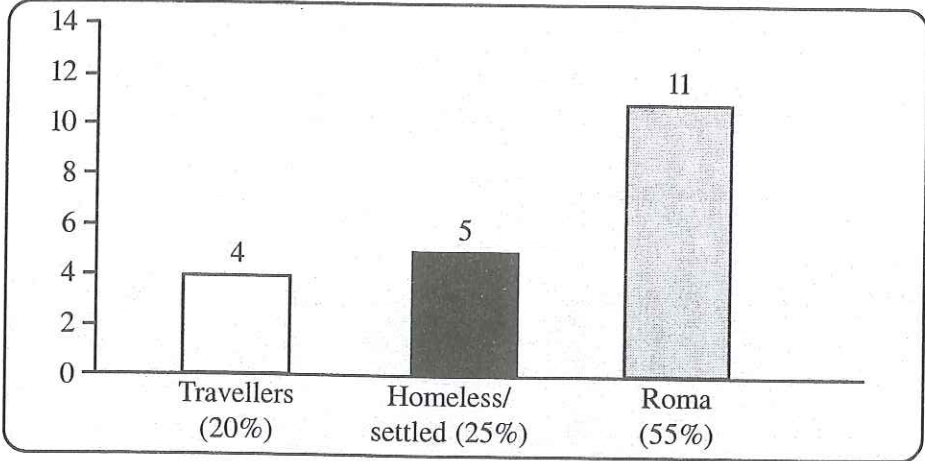
Figure 1: Identified Leanbh child clients since 1997



Increasing number of Roma children

Feedback from the staff of Leanbh indicates that, in recent months, there are increasing numbers of Roma children on the streets begging. This is supported from the records, as Figure 2 overleaf shows that, of the last twenty case files opened by Leanbh, fifty-five per cent are from the Roma community. This is a large increase, if taken against the overall number of clients shown in Figure 1.

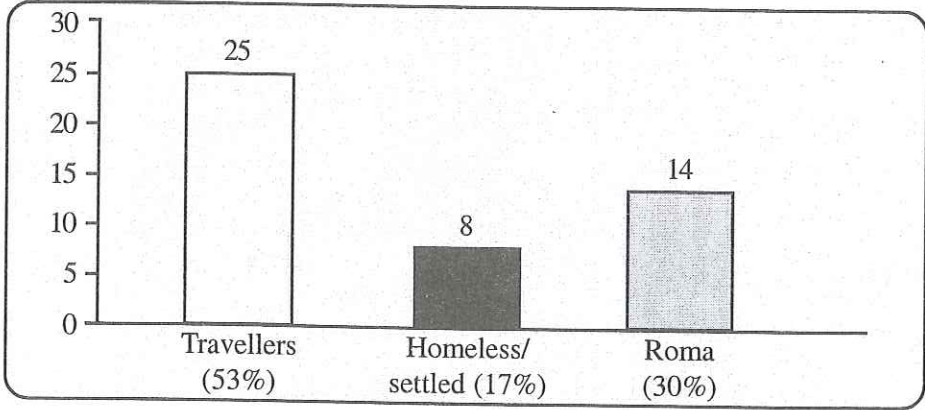
Figure 2: Most recently engaged clients



Leanbh Childhood Support Workers' case work files

Of the 107 children identified since the project began, the Leanbh childhood support workers have specifically targeted a total of forty-seven children for more in-depth case work. The ethnic origins of these forty-seven children are displayed in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Childhood Support Worker case files



Sex, age and areas of origin of clients

The following tables detail gender, age and areas of origin of the targeted client group of the Leanbh service.

Table 6: Gender of targeted clients

Gender	Travellers	Roma	Settled/Homeless	Total
Boys	14	6	7	27
Girls	11	8	1	20
Total	25	14	8	47

Table 7: Average ages of targeted clients

Gender	Travellers	Roma	Settled/Homeless
Boys	13 years	10 years	12 years
Girls	12 years	12 years	16 years

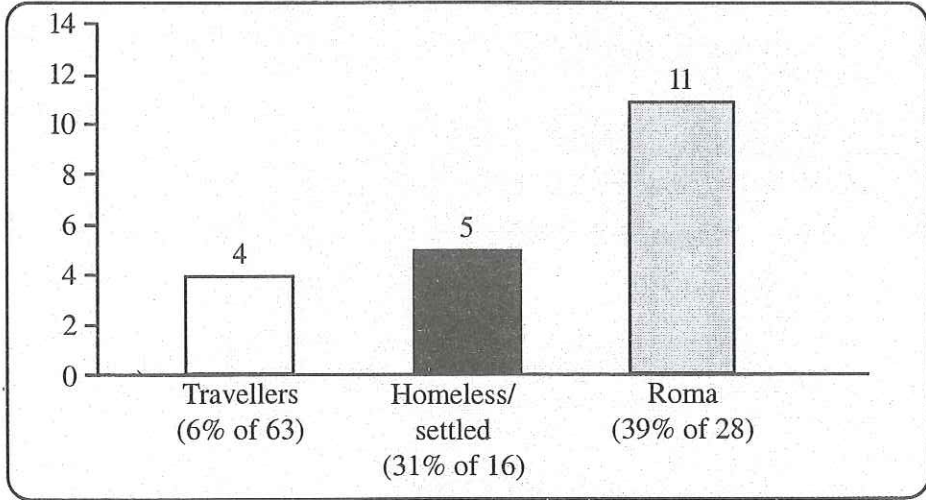
Table 8: Most frequently cited area of origin of targeted clients

	Travellers	Roma	Settled/Homeless
Area	Mulhuddart Finglas	Tallaght	Ballymun Tallaght

Clients with incomplete information

Of the 107 clients listed there is incomplete basic information for twenty cases. When the workers and volunteers engage with the children initially, the children are often reluctant to give their names and addresses. Over time, the information is augmented and a more complete profile emerges. Figure 5 below highlights the fact that there is incomplete information on over a third (39%) of the Roma children identified by the Leanbh service.

Figure 5: Clients about whom incomplete information is held



Client profiles

This section provides a profile of three of the Leanbh clients who participated in the research interviews. The three main groups identified are represented and the profiles were prepared by the researcher using information gathered from the interviews and from the Leanbh case files (all identifying information has been changed).

Rosita

Rosita is a ten-year-old girl who is a member of the Roma community. Rosita lives with her mother and father and her 16-year-old sister in temporary accommodation in south Dublin. She has four other siblings still living in Romania and two others who died of a congenital heart condition in recent years. Rosita also suffers from this condition and needs an operation.

Rosita's family's application for asylum has been rejected and they are currently awaiting the outcome of an appeal. The family has serious financial difficulties, which they attribute to the cost of Rosita's medication without a medical card and the costs of employing a solicitor to pursue their case for asylum.

Rosita first came to the attention of Leabh when she was begging in the inner city with her 16-year-old sister. She regularly accompanies her mother and sister as they sell *The Big Issue* in Dublin.

The Leabh childhood support worker's assessment concluded that:

Rosita is a happy, friendly, amiable child who presents with developed attachments to the family appropriate to her age. She is interested in going to school, and is gentle and generous in nature.

The results of her assessment identified the following needs for Rosita (and her family):

1. End the begging situation
2. Support for her parents around meeting her needs, especially in relation to her heart condition
3. Education – Rosita needs to go to school
4. Facilitation of her expression of her feelings re loss
5. Development of her assertiveness and build social skills
6. Facilitate positive parenting input

From these needs, the following goals were identified for the work with Leabh.

1. To develop a trusting relationship between the childhood support worker and Rosita.
2. To facilitate better child/parent relationships
3. To afford Rosita the opportunity to express her opinions
4. To have her educational needs met through linking with appropriate agencies.

The Individual Intervention Programme was then developed to include:

- ♦ Twice weekly visits with Rosita in her home
- ♦ Positive parenting input around her needs as outlined above, etc.
- ♦ Therapeutic input relating to loss, social skills and assertiveness
- ♦ Link with local school attendance officer over appropriate school placement.

Mary Rose

Mary Rose is an 11-year-old girl and a member of the Travelling community. Mary Rose lives with her mother and father and eight siblings in two caravans with no facilities on the side of the road in south County Dublin. The family moves around a lot and has had a history of difficulties with their living circumstances. They also have many problems such as alcohol, drug abuse and domestic violence. Mary Rose has not been attending school regularly, and she came to the attention of Leabh staff because she frequently goes to the inner city to beg. This behaviour has resulted in Mary Rose appearing in court on a number of occasions, following periods of detention by the Gardaí.

The Leabh childhood support worker, following the assessment, described Mary Rose as an open and friendly child, with a good sense of humour and a positive relationship with her family and parents. Mary Rose is difficult to engage, as she can be angry, and is resistant to changing her behaviour.

The assessment identified Mary Rose's needs as being:

1. Development of skills around the appropriate expression of feelings (e.g. anger)
2. Awareness of the dangers associated with begging
3. Development of relationship building skills
4. Increase in self-esteem
5. Address educational needs and her delay in reading and writing skills
6. Development of parents' awareness of the dangers associated with begging and exploration of their understanding of Mary Rose's needs.

From these needs, the following goals were identified:

1. To stop Mary Rose from begging
2. To support parents around this issue
3. To address educational needs
4. To develop peer relations.

The individual Intervention Programme Plan was developed to include the following:

- ♦ Liase with the Eastern Health Board and Gardaí around begging
- ♦ Work with parents around dangers of begging and explore positive alternatives
- ♦ Facilitate and support Mary Rose's participation in school/training
- ♦ Involve Mary Rose in Leabh groups.
- ♦ Work with Mary Rose and her family's feelings around court appearances.

Jimmy

Jimmy is a six-year-old boy from the majority (settled) population. He lives with his mother, father and two brothers, aged 4 and 8, in a high rise flat complex in north Dublin. Jimmy has two half brothers, aged 18 and 17 years, one of whom has left home; the other was reared in care. Jimmy also had a baby sister who died two years ago at the age of 8 months. Both Jimmy's parents have a history of alcohol abuse. Jimmy's mother says she suffers from her nerves, and she has a history of self harm. Jimmy and his older brother were allegedly sexually abused by a relative and this has been brought to the attention of the Gardaí and the Health Board, who have a community care social worker assigned to and working with the family. Jimmy first came to the attention of Leanbh when he and his brother aged 8 were detained by the Gardaí who found them begging in the inner city. Jimmy's parents do not approve of this behaviour but find it hard to control the young boys and contain them in the flat complex.

The Leanbh childhood support worker, following the assessment, described Jimmy as a loveable and open little boy, who gets on well with his brothers and both parents. His mother says that she finds his outbursts of temper and bad language difficult to manage.

The following needs were identified for Jimmy:

1. Appropriate modelling
2. Increased peer relations
3. Needs to develop own sense of self
4. More consistent parenting
5. Develop relationship building skills.

From these needs, the following goals were identified:

1. To develop an improved sense of self-esteem and self-worth
2. To support and develop the parenting skills of both parents
3. To increase Jimmy's peer relations and social skills
4. To address the issue of the alleged sexual abuse.

The individual Intervention Programme Plan included:

- ♦ Weekly visits with Jimmy at home
- ♦ Undertaking a life story and self-esteem project with Jimmy
- ♦ Modelling with parents and developing with them an understanding of Jimmy's needs
- ♦ Exploring opportunities in the locality to explore friendships and feelings around same
- ♦ Exploring with the Health Board and parents around the allegations of sexual abuse

CHAPTER 6: AIMS, DELIVERY AND IMPACT OF LEANBH

This chapter discusses the findings of the research interviews with a view to examining the effectiveness of the Leanbh service in terms of its aims, delivery and impact on the problem of child begging.

Aims of Leanbh

This section will examine the appropriateness of the aims of the service and will then evaluate whether they have been achieved. The aims of the service, as outlined in Leanbh policy documentation, were to:

1. Actively monitor the presence of begging children on the streets;
2. Immediately link the children found begging with appropriate statutory services;
3. Identify and work with the parents of such children to encourage a better understanding of children's needs and parental responsibility;
4. Engage in parental and public education with a view to changing societal ambivalence towards and parental acceptance of this form of child exploitation
5. Provide therapeutic interventions to children who beg and co-work with parents to achieve these aims.

Prior to the establishment of Leanbh, senior management in the ISPCC examined a number of different possible approaches, and considered undertaking long-term work with the families and helping them to deal with the key issues in their lives. The organisation decided on an approach that, firstly, took the children off the streets and out of immediate risk, and then attempted to engage with the families. The ISPCC formulated a strategy that involved referring every sighting of a child begging to the statutory services and identified, and linked in with, the parents when they came to collect the children from the Garda stations.

The validity of the aims of Leanbh in terms of emerging social conditions is central to the evaluation of the Leanbh service. In interview with the senior management of the ISPCC, it was clear that the organisation identified children begging as a child protection issue that required a response. This view was shared by all of the other organisations surveyed, both from the statutory and voluntary sectors. Each respondent made clear unambiguous statements

along these lines in the course of the interview, an example of which is this statement from a director of one of the voluntary organisations:

No child should be allowed beg ... I would see it as a form of cruelty.

This consensus on a definition of child begging as a form of abuse and neglect is common ground for all of the groups working in the field. Of the sixteen professionals interviewed, most welcomed the fact that the ISPCC was prepared to put resources into this area. One Health Board social worker said:

This is the first dedicated service for the kids begging who do not fit in to the other services ... and it is something that I would very much welcome.

However, differences do emerge as one begins to examine the priority that should be given to responding to this form of abuse, and the nature of the most appropriate response for services in the statutory and voluntary organisations.

Senior management in the ISPCC, management, staff and volunteers of Leabhbh all expressed their approval of the aims of the project as stated above.

The clients had a mixed understanding of what the service is about. Most knew that it was about getting the children off the streets. All did not agree with this. Three of the fifteen parents interviewed felt that, if the ISPCC were concerned about them and their children, they should do something about the more pressing issues – accommodation, lack of facilities, etc. One Traveller woman expressed her concern saying:

I have no toilet or water ... if Leabhbh are worried about my children, then let them do something about this.

In effect, this idea is echoed in any further criticism of the aims of the project by the statutory and voluntary organisations surveyed. All of these organisations believed that child begging is a form of neglect and abuse. All were quick in their condemnation of child begging. However, of those interviewed, nine out of the sixteen representatives made reference to the fact that they saw begging as the outward symptom of deep underlying problems. One Health Board social worker expressed his concern as follows:

At one level, I felt that maybe it was inappropriate to spend so much money on one particular aspect of a larger problem. Here you have children of families who are living with multiple social problems and discrimination ... We are pouring huge resources into the most visible aspect or symptom of these problems.

Others agreed with these sentiments. The director of one Traveller organisation said:

If the ISPCC is concerned about child protection within the Travelling community, they should begin by asking why Travelling children are dying at a rate far higher than the settled children, and why their health status is so far below the national average, and how does the standard of accommodation and level of social exclusion affect Travelling children? These are real human rights issues and should be concentrated on, rather than working with a small minority because they are visible.

The publicity around the launch of Leabhbh highlighted the numbers of sightings of children begging. This led to a perception amongst other organisations that the project was concerned only with removing children from the streets, rather than with the range of social problems that would be causing these families to beg. However, the practical experience of the research team was that, as the Leabhbh staff engaged with the children to the point of undertaking an Individual Programme Plan, they were attempting to address the underlying issues.

Achievement of Aims

The following examination of each individual aim shows that the staff and volunteers have maintained focus on the goals of the service and have made significant progress in meeting each individual area.

1. Actively monitor the presence of begging children on the streets.

The high level of presence of staff and volunteers on the streets is one of the key features of the service. The establishment of files that assist in the identification of 107 children, and the close liaison with the Gardaí, puts Leabhbh in an excellent position to monitor the level and patterns of begging on the streets.

2. Immediately link the children found begging with appropriate statutory services.

This policy has been strictly adhered to by the staff and volunteers. The number of referrals to the Eastern Health Board was 2,872 in 1997/98. While this number in itself is impressive, discussion with the Health Board social workers indicates that, for the most part, they have been unable to respond to these referrals. Eight of the fifteen parents interviewed reported that they have had no contact with the Health Board. Linking the families in with the Gardaí has been more effective. The Leabhbh approach has helped the Gardaí identify the children and families who are involved in begging on the streets.

3. Identify and work with the parents of such children to encourage a better understanding of children's needs and parental responsibility.

The Leabhbh childhood support workers have been able to target and work with forty-seven children and their families to varying degrees. Parenting programmes have been run by the workers and they are direct in explaining responsibilities to the parents. In practice, gaining the trust of the parents is more about recognising their needs and assisting them where possible, than attributing blame or administering advice. Of the fifteen parents interviewed, twelve clearly stated that they did not want their children on the streets begging. In each of the ten families interviewed, the Leabhbh worker had tried to assist in a variety of matters, ranging from accommodation to money advice.

4. *Engage in parental and public education with a view toward changing societal ambivalence towards and parental acceptance of this form of child exploitation.*

The Leabhb staff felt strongly that there is a need to have a public awareness campaign which would educate the population about the dangers associated with street life, and how giving money to children on the streets only compounds the problem. This was echoed by one of the Health Board social workers, who said that:

The campaign should be to stop the public from giving money. One young girl who Leabhb tried to get into a FÁS programme quickly resumed begging when she realised that she could make a lot more money on the street.

5. *Provide therapeutic interventions to children who beg and co-work with parents to achieve these aims.*

An Individual Programme Plan has been devised for each of the forty-seven clients targeted by the service. The level of engagement would seem to depend heavily on the relationship between the Leabhb worker and the parent. Of the fifteen parents interviewed, twelve indicated that they are thankful to the Leabhb workers for the work they do with the children. One of the Roma mothers explained that the Leabhb worker comes and:

... helps Karla (name changed) to read and write and she helped to get her into a school. Karla loves to see her coming. I am very grateful to the worker.

In summary, the Leabhb service is going a considerable way towards meeting its aims. The Leabhb staff are attempting to address the relevant broader issues with the families they are targeting and, in the case of six of the ten families surveyed, Leabhb is the only organisation working with these families.

The delivery of the Leabhb service

The main features of the Leabhb service have been outlined in Chapter 4. Following the research interviews, a number of issues emerged relating to the strengths of the service and the challenges it faces.

Strengths

(i) Relationship with Gardaí

A very positive working relationship has developed with the Gardaí over the years since the launch of the programme. The three Gardaí interviewed all spoke highly of Leabhb, and were keen to build on the relationship with the service. One senior figure stated that the problem of children begging is a 'social problem' and, as such, should be dealt with on this basis. This he saw as significant, as he believed that the Gardaí were limited in what they could do, but Leabhb was able to follow up with the children and their families, and he believed that this was where progress could be made.

Another Garda said that he estimated that there were about twenty families involved in begging and that, even if Leabhb only worked with two of these, and the children stopped begging, this would have a significant impact on the problem.

At a senior level, the Gardaí have made it clear that their policy is to detain any children found begging. When the children are in custody, the Leabhb workers should be contacted so that they can come down to the station and meet with them, and wait until their parents arrive.

Another very positive outcome of the interaction with the Gardaí is the advent of the Leabhb/Gardaí Liaison Committee. This is a committee which includes the Leabhb staff and nine Garda representatives – four from Pearse Street, four from Harcourt Terrace and one from Store Street. The committee meets once a month. Information about the families that beg is shared, and issues relating to the working relationship between Leabhb and the Gardaí are raised and discussed. This type of collaboration is proving very effective, and the staff report that increasing referrals to the service are coming from the Gardaí.

Another option that is being negotiated by Leabhb with the Gardaí is that, when the Leabhb team come on duty, they could contact the Gardaí who control the inner city surveillance cameras and these Gardaí could direct the Leabhb workers to locations where there are children begging.

(ii) Relationships with the children and their parents

Very positive relationships have been built between Leabhb staff and volunteers and many of the children and their parents over the three years of the project. Although seven of the twelve children interviewed said that they were unhappy and angry with the Leabhb staff for calling the Gardaí when they were begging, they still were keen to go on outings and swimming trips with Leabhb staff. In fact, nine of the twelve children gave overall positive reports of their experiences with the Leabhb project. From spending time with the staff while on visits and street patrol, the researcher observed that, in general, the relationship between the workers and the children is very positive.

This is particularly so with the Roma children that Leabhb has engaged. All three Roma families interviewed were very positive, and appreciative of the service they are receiving from Leabhb. These families tended to identify strongly with the individual childhood support worker and saw the worker as the organisation. One Roma father said that his 11-year-old son

... has changed a lot since Leabhb have started to call to the house. My boy brightens up for the Leabhb worker's visits the same way as he does for me when I return after being away for a few days.

These positive relationships do not develop easily, and credit is due to the workers' skills and tenacity in continuing to call and engage with the child, in spite of a sometimes hostile or unfriendly initial reception.

(iii) Access to the families

In its 1998 Annual Report, Leanbh asserted that many of the families they were meeting had little or no contact with any other agencies from the voluntary or statutory sectors. Of the ten families interviewed, seven said that they had no contact with the Health Board, and six said that they had no dealings with any of the other voluntary support agencies. Three of these were Roma families, and they all reported that they had no contact with any other support organisation, except in one instance, where the Leanbh worker had arranged an appointment with a local Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS). The living circumstances and often transitory lifestyle of the families whose children tend to beg render them inaccessible for the mainstream services. Leanbh has succeeded in overcoming these difficulties, and they can follow families as they move from one area to another, and are not bound by any geographical constraints in the way an area social worker would be.

(iv) Activity/recreational programmes

Seven out of the twelve children interviewed said that they go into town to beg because they have nothing else to do, and they can earn some money while passing the time. Indeed, the lack of facilities and recreational space was a striking factor in the living circumstances of all those interviewed. Four of the respondents said that, if there was something better to do, they would not be in town begging.

All of the seven Traveller children said that they enjoyed going swimming with the Leanbh project, and this programme seemed to generate the most interest and excitement for them. All said that they would like more of this type of programme that would take them off the sites and away for some fun. Three of these children, when hearing of Leanbh, quickly asked the researcher, 'When are we going swimming?' These sentiments were also echoed by four of the parents, who blamed lack of facilities and nowhere to play for the children going into the city to beg.

(v) Family work

Staff and management all outlined the importance of family work. The approach of the childhood support workers is methodical and practical. It seeks to keep the child as the central client, and to work with the family on the key issues that impact on the needs of the child. Emphasis on this work builds the trust with the family, enables the worker to gain a deeper understanding of the causes of the child begging, and provides an opportunity to tackle some of the issues in the longer term.

Of the families interviewed, four paid specific tribute to the work of the childhood support workers, outlining how they assisted the family in contacting the local authorities, linking them with money advice services, and were there as someone to talk to. One Roma mother said, 'I do not know what I would do without the Leanbh worker.'

*Challenges**(i) Referral policy*

The relationship between Leanbh and the Health Board is dominated by the Leanbh policy of referring every individual sighting of a child begging to the Health Board social workers. This approach resulted in Leanbh making 2,287 referrals to the Eastern Health Board in 1998. All of the five senior social workers interviewed in the Health Board spoke of their frustration with the number and quality of these referrals. They said that they receive repeat referrals with incomplete information (often no name or address) about the sighting of a child begging in the city. They cannot respond to these, as they have to prioritise their work, and one social worker said that the most that can be done with the referrals is to organise and file them. Another social worker said:

I'm not sure what the function is in sending us these referrals ... if they're trying to help the Health Board follow up child abuse and child neglect, it's not working. They are only just creating more paperwork and paperwork that can't go anywhere.

One of the social workers interviewed said that he saw this referral policy as

... a campaign of pressure mounted by the ISPCC to advocate on behalf of the kids and to put them on the agenda ... however, I don't think this is effective.

The Leanbh annual report in 1998 acknowledged that this approach was not working when it stated:

Very few of the 2,872 referrals made by Leanbh to the Eastern Health Board during 1997/1998 resulted in any concrete action by them.

All five of the social workers interviewed agreed that, generally, they do not respond to this method of referral, and view it as a source of frustration and administrative overload for their already overstretched child care services.

This referral policy, in practice, is reducing the opportunity for an integrated response to the needs of the children who are begging. There are also considerable opportunity costs associated with the time spent by the staff and volunteers in making the referrals. Both of the childhood support workers set aside two days per week to write up and send these referrals. A more collaborative approach would require the statutory services, along with Leanbh, to work together to tackle the problems of children begging.

(ii) Calling the Gardaí for every sighting of a child begging

Leanbh staff and volunteers call the Gardaí and report every sighting of a child begging. This often results in the child being arrested, taken to the station and held until the parents come to collect them. For many of the children and their parents, this is the first consequence of their interaction with Leanbh. This approach has caused a lot of anger amongst the client group. One of the Traveller women interviewed, while agreeing that young children should not be begging, stated that

... it's not helpful getting ten-year-olds brought down to the station, that's surely not right, ten-year-olds frightened of their lives in the station.

Another woman felt that

... it was disgraceful to see where the children were taken and not given a bit of food or anything to eat for hours on end.

This policy of calling the Gardaí when a child is sighted begging was the main cause of concern about Leanbh voiced by the client group. All six Traveller families interviewed made reference to this, with varying degrees of intensity.

However, discomfort about this approach was also expressed by three of the Health Board staff and by six of the professionals from the other organisations. One social worker made the point that

... taking the child into a police station isn't necessarily good for the child ... what is the outcome for the child? ... If you are planning your service from the experience of the child up, this can be a very negative way to start.

Workers in the voluntary sector expressed concern that this approach was introducing already vulnerable people into the criminal justice system and, in effect, criminalising them.

The anger that the clients expressed about this approach is often directed towards the Leanbh workers. One child said:

When I see them (Leanbh staff and volunteers) coming, I shout and roar and make a show of them on the street.

In effect, this hostility can act as a serious block to developing the relationship with the family and child to any level where therapeutic work can be undertaken.

While the arrest of the children can be of help in the identification of unknown children, this has to be balanced against the negative impact on the relationship and level of trust.

(iii) Integration of service delivery

The launch of Leanbh in October 1997 created a negative response from many of the other voluntary organisations working in the field. Six of the organisations surveyed felt that they had not been adequately consulted by the ISPCC prior to the establishment of the service. One social worker said:

The biggest problem for me (with Leanbh) was lack of consultation with all of the existing services in the Dublin area ... they did not consult effectively and appropriately with any of the organisations around ... for the service to go forward they should get together with the service providers in Dublin.

These perceptions have remained for many of the organisations and they continue to harbour some distrust of the Leanbh service. Strained relations with these groups decrease the possibility of integrated service delivery, and mitigate against a collaborative approach which would work in the clients' best interests.

All six of the workers interviewed in the voluntary organisations said that they were not sure of the nature of the work the Leanbh staff were undertaking with the client groups. They also felt that there could be opportunities to work more closely and that this would be a good outcome. Indeed, most of those interviewed welcomed the Leanbh service, and all expressed an interest in working more closely with Leanbh for the benefit of the clients. One health board social worker gave an example of one case where Leanbh had worked with the Health Board in a collaborative way:

This was great, the Leanbh worker came to meetings and was willing to go out and do the work with this teenager. This was really helpful.

It is clear that the opportunity does exist for Leanbh to work in a more integrated manner with the other service providers, both statutory and voluntary. However, progress will only be made in this when both Leanbh and the other services come together openly to look at options around the best way forward for the clients.

In summary, the Leanbh project clearly has many strengths in the manner in which it delivers its services. There are also some challenges, which the service will need to address in order to maximise its potential into the future.

Impact of Leanbh service

The impact of the Leanbh service in its three years of operation can be reviewed at a number of different levels. For the purpose of this evaluation, the following aspects of the impact were examined:

- ♦ Numbers of children begging;
- ♦ Identification of children begging;
- ♦ Quality of clients' lives.

Numbers of children begging

The Leanbh annual report of 1998 stated that the first year of work of the project had resulted in 'a 26 per cent decrease in the number of children sighted begging in the city and a 38 per cent drop in children begging alone'. This is an impressive result, although the method of using sightings of children begging as a means of reflecting *actual* levels of begging has been called into question by many of the voluntary groups working in the field. This issue was the cause of some of the negative reaction by the voluntary sector at the time of the launch of the service. The director of one organisation said this use of sightings was exaggerating the numbers of children and misleading the public:

Leanbh talk about 150 children begging and this is out of proportion. Amongst the Travelling community there are only a small number of families involved in street begging.

He went on to say that, after the three years, he still sees the same families begging and with no obvious reduction in the numbers.

It would seem that using numbers related to sightings of children begging as an indicator of begging levels is open to question. The actual number of sightings is likely to be as much a function of the number of staff and volunteers out on the streets, and the amount of time they spend out, as it is the number of children begging.

The responses from the interviews with the other organisations indicated a mixed view as to whether the numbers of children begging had decreased. The voluntary organisations were mostly sceptical about Leanbh's claims. On the other hand, the Gardaí, who would have the highest presence on the streets, all felt that the numbers had decreased, and that this could be attributed to the collaborative approach between Leanbh and the Gardaí. The view from the clients would seem to support this. One Traveller woman, when asked if Leanbh made a difference to the numbers of children begging, replied:

It has made a huge difference, like, because there was an awful lot of women out there begging with small kids, but since Leanbh has been out it's got them off the streets, and that's good because in the winter time it is very severe for children out there begging.

Identification of the children begging

The service has been effective in identifying 107 children who are involved in begging on the streets of Dublin. The level of interaction and engagement with these children varies greatly. Of the forty-seven children targeted by the service, useful therapeutic work has been undertaken and this is a very encouraging aspect of the project.

Quality of clients' lives

A full analysis of the impact of the Leanbh service on the quality of the clients' lives would require more detailed study. However, feedback from the clients interviewed does give some indication of their perceptions.

Of the twelve children interviewed, eight said that they really look forward to the visit of the Leanbh childhood support worker. One settled woman said that her son

... loves the attention the worker gives him and counts the days from visit to visit.

She went on to describe how her child has temper outbursts, and how the worker has been helping him with these. This feedback should not be undervalued, as all of the clients interviewed, without exception, live in very difficult circumstances and the children have little to look forward to.

Ten of the fifteen parents interviewed said that they no longer allow their children to beg. Two Traveller women said that they will continue to beg themselves, but they both said that,

because of Leanbh's interventions, they would not bring young children into town to beg with them anymore.

In summary, there were different views expressed from the different groups interviewed on the impact of the Leanbh service. However, it would appear, overall, that Leanbh is having a positive impact on the issue of child begging and in its interactions with the children who beg and their families.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND OPTIONS

As is apparent from the research, the Leabhb service has been effective in achieving most of its aims and in engaging with the children who beg in Dublin, and their families. The complexity of the problem of child begging has been well documented throughout this study and, as such, it is likely that the problem of children begging on the streets will continue in Dublin, despite the best efforts of the Leabhb project.

This final chapter of the evaluation outlines a number of conclusions which have been drawn from the findings of the research, under three sub-headings:

- a. policy issues;
- b. service development; and
- c. staff and volunteers.

Included with each conclusion is a recommendation and an option put forward as a possible alternative for action related to the recommendation.

A. Policy issues

1. Strategic approach

Conclusion

At the end of the three-year pilot period, it is obvious that the project has had many successes and has uncovered some challenges for the future. The experience base of the project has been established and one of the significant aspects of the project is the willingness of the staff to adapt to the changing environment in which they work. The changing nature of the client group and the ongoing relationships with other organisations provide opportunities for the service to develop proactively.

Recommendation

To enable the project to maximise its potential, the management, staff and volunteers should strategically examine the direction of the service, and establish a plan of work for the next period that will embrace the full complexity of the problem of child begging.

Option

A review of the aims of the project could be appropriate, and should reflect the experience of the staff and volunteers and the actual practice of the service, as it has begun to move beyond the original aims and is working at a deeper level with the families.

2. Health Board referrals

Conclusion

The referral of every sighting of child begging to the Health Board social workers has not proved effective in linking the clients with appropriate supports, and has served to create tension between the Health Board and the Leabhb project. It is also an administrative drain on the time of the workers, which could be used to more productive effect.

Recommendation

The Leabhb service should review its referral policy and its impact on the relationship with the Health Boards, and look for different ways of continuing the ISPCC policy of mandatory reporting that would prove more beneficial for the client group.

Option

One option that Leabhb has recently adopted for one community care area is to provide the social work team with a monthly report relating to the level and detail of the child begging relevant to that area. Individual families can then be connected with the Health Board on a more collaborative basis and based on the needs of the child and his/her family.

3. Calling Gardaí for every sighting of a child begging

Conclusion

The policy of calling the Gardaí for every sighting of a child begging is creating a lot of anger for the client group. This is negatively affecting the relationship of trust between the worker and the child, and is impeding the progression of a therapeutic input from Leabhb. Leabhb has established a positive working relationship with the Gardaí in Dublin. Most of the children begging have now been identified by the Leabhb project. The Gardaí have a stated policy of removing children found begging to the Garda station and contacting the Leabhb workers to stay with the children until they are collected.

Recommendation

Leabhb should review this policy, taking on board the reactions of the client group and of the other organisations working in the field. The service should decide whether the disadvantages of this policy outweigh the benefits.

Option

One option is for the service to continue to encourage the Gardaí, at senior level, to put their stated policy into practice. If the clients were to see Leabhb being called in by the Gardaí to help, rather than the current situation where the clients see Leabhb staff getting them arrested, this would be a significant improvement and assist the workers in building the trust of the children more quickly.

4. Public awareness campaign

Conclusion

There is a need to challenge the public's attitude to child begging, and to educate people around positive alternatives to giving money to children who are on the streets.

Recommendation

The ISPCC and Leanbh are well positioned to be at the forefront of such a campaign, and this is a strategy that the service should consider.

Option

The Leanbh management, staff and volunteers could address this issue and decide if it is worthy of the agency's attention and, if so, examine options as to how to proceed.

B. Service development

5. Activity based services

Conclusion

All of the clients, and particularly the children, gave positive feedback about the activity-based programmes, such as swimming, that Leanbh provides. Boredom and unavailability and inaccessibility of resources would seem to be some of the forces driving children into town to beg.

Recommendation

Leanbh should provide more activity-based programmes and increase the level of engagement at this level.

Option

There would be potential to develop a youth service component to the Leanbh project. This could involve employing two youth workers (with minibus) who could focus on a developmental and activity-based youth work programme. Funding could be sourced from the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund and/or through the City of Dublin Youth Service Board.

6. Integration of service delivery

Conclusion

Leanbh has tended to work in isolation from the other range of services that exist in this field. The workers have tended to link in with other services only in relation to individual clients.

Recommendation

Leanbh should be proactive in seeking out ways of linking its service in to the range of other services that are available to the client group. By doing this, when an individual client is in need of a service, the relationship between the agencies would be well established, and would facilitate better uptake and smoother access for the client.

Option

Leanbh could host a seminar/workshop around the theme of integrating service delivery to their client group. This would be openly stating a desire to work with these organisations in a collaborative manner. An opportunity now exists to undertake such a seminar in partnership with a Health Board Community Care team and/or one or more of the voluntary agencies.

7. Alternative to Garda stations

Conclusion

The removal of young children from the streets and then detain them in Garda stations is not the most desirable situation, as the children are often frightened or intimidated by this environment.

Recommendation

It is not the responsibility of Leanbh or the ISPCC to provide and manage an alternative holding/reception centre for children removed from the streets by the Gardaí. However, Leanbh is uniquely placed to open up debate with the Health Board, Gardaí and other voluntary agencies about how this problem could be resolved.

Option

This could be put on the agenda for the Leanbh service to review and discuss internally, with a view to establishing whether it is appropriate for them to pursue this issue and, if so, how best to proceed. The Garda Special Projects Scheme could be in a position to assist in this matter.

C. Staff and volunteers

8. Volunteer support

Conclusion

Leanbh has a clear aim of increasing the number of volunteers to approximately fifty, in order to provide full 24-hour cover for the streets. Such an increase in the number of volunteers will put an unrealistic pressure on the staff to continue the high level of training and support that they currently provide to the volunteers.

Recommendation

Any increase in volunteer numbers should be matched with resources and structures to continue the high level of support and supervision currently on offer to the volunteers.

Option

The staff are already looking at options around creating teams of volunteers and team leaders for these teams. This would seem to be a useful way to support the volunteers as their numbers grow.

9. Staff and volunteer training**Conclusion**

Staff and volunteer training has no formal input on issues of culture, ethnicity and anti-racist practice.

Recommendation

Antiracist/cultural awareness training should be incorporated into the staff and volunteer training programmes. These sessions would give validation to the positive aspects of these groups and the potential of their contribution to a multicultural Ireland.

Option

Members of the Travelling and Roma communities could give these sessions, where possible. Pavee Point provides such a service to groups who work with Travellers and, while it may be more difficult to source trainers from the Roma community, this could be explored.

10. Future staff recruitment**Conclusion**

The employment of members of the Travelling and Roma communities to work in the Leabhb service would greatly increase the programme's effectiveness. This would not be easy, but the rewards could be many and far reaching. This approach would provide a unique opportunity for Leabhb to be at the forefront in empowering these communities to take responsibility and control of their own lives.

Recommendation

As the service develops, more staff should be sourced from the Travelling and Roma communities.

Option

The youth work positions mentioned above could be filled by members of the clients' own communities. Flexibility and imagination would be required, and appropriate individualised training would need to be built in to their work. However, the long-term benefits would justify this effort.

Summary

The nature of child begging is multifaceted and complex. Although there is little information and formal research into the causative influences on child begging, professional staff from voluntary and statutory agencies have been attempting to tackle the problem for many years.

The Leabhb service is the first designated project specifically designed to work with the children and families involved in street begging. As such, it has been broadly welcomed across the voluntary and statutory sectors. While different opinions do exist amongst these agencies about the approach of the Leabhb service, there is a genuine interest in working more closely together with the project, in the interests of promoting the best possible range and delivery of services to this client group.

This evaluation has shown that Leabhb is a well organised and clearly focused project. Its services are managed and delivered effectively, and in a short period of time, the project has made considerable progress in achieving its original aims.

The Leabhb project was established as a three-year pilot in October 1997 and the opportunity now exists for Leabhb to bring forward the experiences and learning of the last three years as the service develops and adapts to the ever changing needs of its client group.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ad Hoc Group on Children Begging (1992) *Report on vulnerable Traveller children begging on the streets*. Dublin.
- Ad Hoc Group on Children Begging (1997) Minutes from 'Travellers Begging' meeting 25.3.1997 (Children Begging file).
- Barnardo's (1996) *Children on inner city streets in Dublin*. Dublin: Barnardo's.
- Barry & Leslie (1986) *The Travellers health status study*. Dublin: The Health Research Board.
- Brearley, M. (1996) *The Roma/Gypsies of Europe*. JPR Policy Paper, Number 3.
- Child Care Act (1991) Dublin: Stationery Office.
- Children Act (1997) Dublin: Stationery Office.
- Coles, B., Craig, G. (1999) Excluded youth and the growth of begging. Chapter 5 in: Dean, H. (ed.) (1999) *Begging questions: Street level activity and social policy failure*. Bristol: The Policy Press, pp. 63-82.
- Connolly, K. (2000) New world, old struggle. *The Guardian*, Wednesday 7th June, 2000 (Web source: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/>)
- Correspondence between the Housing Welfare Team, Dublin Corporation and the Travellers Team (1994) Re: Traveller children begging in Dublin city. 13 September 1994. (Children Begging file).
- Correspondence between the Travellers Team of Dublin Corporation and the Department of the Environment (1997) Re: Traveller children begging in Dublin city. April 16th 1997.
- Crosscare (1996) *Accommodating Travelling people*. Dublin: Crosscare.
- Dean, H. (ed.) (1999) *Begging questions: Street level activity and social policy failure*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Department of Foreign Affairs (Human Rights Unit) (1996) *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: First National Report of Ireland*. Dublin: Stationery Office.
- Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (2000a) *Important new developments in Irish asylum and immigration policy*. (Web source: <http://www.irgov.ie/justice/publications/asylum/asypol.htm>)
- Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (2000b) *Asylum applications and country of origin of asylum applications 1999-2000*. Correspondence with Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.
- ESRI (1986) *Population, structure and living circumstances of Irish Travellers*. Dublin: Stationery Office.
- European Committee on Migration (CDMG) (1995) *The situation of Gypsies (Roma and Sinti) in Europe*. Report adopted by the CDMG on May 5th 1995.
- Fonseca, I. (1995) *Bury me standing: The Gypsies and their journey*. Vintage, London.
- Fonseca, I. (2000) The truth about Gypsies, *The Guardian*, Friday March 24th, 2000, (Web source: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/>)
- Gheorghe, N. (1991) Roma-Gypsy ethnicity in Eastern Europe, *Social Research*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (Winter 1991).
- Hamilton, H. (1998) Hostages to fortune. *Irish Times*, Saturday 8th August, 1998.
- Hardy, J. (2000) Zero tolerance. *The Guardian*, Saturday 25th June, 2000. (Web source: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/>)
- Howley, D. (2000) *An outstretched hand – a sociological insight into street begging in Dublin city*. PhD thesis, unpublished, May 2000.
- Irish National Co-ordinating Committee for the European Year Against Racism (1998) *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers of Europe: An examination of racism and discrimination*. Dublin: Pavee Point Publications.
- ISPCC (no date) Leanbh 'Protecting Children Begging' leaflet.
- ISPCC (1998) *Leanbh Annual Report 1997/98*. Dublin: ISPCC.
- ITM (1993) *Education and Travellers*. Dublin: Irish Traveller Movement.
- Leanbh (1997) Child begging incidence research (Dublin city centre), September 5th to 21st 1997.
- Matras, Dr. Y. (1996) *Problems arising with international mobility*. European Committee on Migration.
- McCarthy, P. (1994) The sub-culture of poverty reconsidered, in McCann, M., Ó'Síocháin, S., Ruane, J. (eds) *Irish Travellers: Culture and ethnicity*. Belfast: The Queen's University.
- McCarthy, P. (1995) *Health provision for the Travelling community in Ireland*. Galway: Centre for Health Promotion Studies, UCG.
- McVerry, P. (1997) A Minister for children. *The Big Issue*, February.
- O'Donnell, L. (1993) Dáil Question number 17, 6th July 1993 (Child Begging file).
- Ó'Aodha, M. (1998) Roma immigration to Ireland, *Patrin Web Journal*, posted 1st November. (Web source: <http://www.patin.com/>)
- Ó'hAodha, M. (2000) Immigration in Ireland: Coping with a new Diaspora, *Patrin Web Journal*, posted 2nd May. (Web source: <http://www.patin.com/>)

- O'Mahoney, P (2000) Direct provision – a recipe for social exclusion. *Poverty Today*, No. 47, July/August 2000, Combat Poverty Agency.
- O'Moráin, P. (1997) A child put out to beg who deserves better. *Irish Times*, Thursday 1st May 2000.
- O'Moráin, P. (1997) Travellers criticise ISPCC plan to tackle child begging. *Irish Times*, Friday 3rd October 1997.
- Opinion (1997) Children begging. *Irish Times*, 'Opinion', Saturday 4th October 1997.
- Report of the Forum on Youth Homelessness* (2000) Dublin: Northern Area Health Board, Swords.
- Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community* (1995) Dublin: Stationery Office.
- Sampson, A (2000) Final Frontier. *The Guardian*, Saturday April 1st, 2000. (Web source: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/>)
- UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (1998) *Summary record of the 438th meeting: Ireland 15.01.1998*. (Web source: <http://www.unhcr.ch>)
- Ward, M. (1998) Health Board's response to children begging criticised. *Irish Times*, Friday 23rd October, 1998.
- Williams, C. (1993) Who are 'street children'? A hierarchy of street use and appropriate responses. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, Vol. 17.

APPENDIX I: PARENTAL CONSENT LETTER/FORM

Date:

Dear Parent,

I am working with the Children's Research Centre in Trinity College to undertake an evaluation of the ISPCC's Leanbh project. To do this, I need to meet with the children and parents Leanbh works with, to find out about thoughts and feelings about the service, its strengths, weaknesses and ways it can be improved.

Therefore, I am writing to ask you if it would be okay to talk to you and your children about Leanbh.

All information that is given to me will be completely confidential, and you and your children's names will not be used in the report that I will be writing.

If you agree to let me talk with you and your child/children about Leanbh, I would be pleased if you could sign the consent form.

If you have any questions later about any of the above, please call me on [telephone number].

Yours sincerely,

Conor Hickey
Researcher

Research consent form

I _____
(parent's name) give my permission to the Children's Research Centre, Trinity College,
Dublin, to interview my son/daughter _____
(child's name)

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Witnessed: _____

APPENDIX 2: INCOME AND
EXPENDITURE:

LEANBH 1998, 1999 & 2000

	1997/98	1998/99	1999/2000
<i>Income</i>			
Donations	£217,336	£60,788	£44,753
Deposit interest	£1,644	£4,752	£1,394
Total income	£218,980	£65,540	£46,147
<i>Expenditure</i>			
Salaries	£71,492	£50,873	£54,770
Advertising & publicity	£6,324	—	—
Fundraising expenses	£1,551	—	—
Translation services	£1,295	£3,522	£4,261
Launch costs	£600	—	—
Printing	£7,243	—	—
Furnishing/Equipment	£659	£667	—
Stationary	£227	£73	£500
Motor & Travel	£5,229	£6,699	£9,499
Telephone	£1,858	£3,860	£4,051
Rent	£3,373	£3,041	£3,041
Light & heat	£907	£811	£1,026
Bank charges	£40	£56	£54
Renovation of premises	£7,000	—	—
Donation to Traveller Group	£1,000	—	—
Pool hire	£128	£806	£318
Sundry expenses	£2,236	£2,094	£917
Depreciation motor vehicle	—	£4,521	£2,584
Annual Report	—	£2,473	£812
Research	—	—	£17,209
Total expenses	£111,212	£79,495	£99,042