

**In response to "Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation
Measure 2004"
a consultation document issued by Northern Ireland
Statistics & Research Agency**

Employers For Childcare

Employers For Childcare is a registered charity funded until June 2006 through the European Social Fund under the Northern Ireland Programme for Building Sustainable Prosperity, supported by match-funding from the Executive Programme Funds administered by the Department for Employment and Learning.

The main aim of the project is to reduce or remove the childcare barrier by encouraging employers to invest in childcare provision for their employees.

The project provides a range of services including:

- Business to Business Mentoring
- Advice and Information Helpline
- Childcare Voucher Schemes

DOMAIN 5.2 QUESTIONS – Employment Deprivation

Are there indicators not included which should be included?

This domain measures employment deprivation conceptualised as involuntary exclusion of the working age population from the world of work. In the previous Measures consideration was not given to the inclusion of carers as data was not available for this group.

In 2003 Employers For Childcare carried out a 'childcare and employment' survey across Northern Ireland's 34 job centres. The main aim of the survey, entitled *The Childcare Barrier: is childcare the most prohibitive factor for women in Northern Ireland who want to work*, was to establish if childcare was the main barrier for women who wanted to secure employment for the first time or return to employment. The main findings are as follows:

- For women attending their local jobcentre, 50% said that finding suitable childcare was the biggest barrier in securing employment and 17% found the cost of childcare a major problem. Of those attending local women's and community groups 49% said that finding suitable childcare was the biggest barrier and a further 17% found the anticipated cost of childcare a major problem.
- Other barriers included transport, having up to date skills, filling in application forms, preparing for the interview, lack of confidence in own ability and the length of time respondents had been unemployed.
- There was a significant relationship between the length of unemployment and perceived barriers to securing employment for women attending jobcentres as well as those women attending women's and community groups. The longer women had been unemployed the more barriers they identified in relation to securing employment.
- Only 15% of the women attending local women's and community groups were receiving relevant training in order to enter employment for the first time or return to the labour market. This training focused on IT skills.
- There was a relationship between the length of time respondents had been unemployed and their reasons for seeking employment now. These included financial reasons, wanting to further their career, their children not being as dependent and wanting to contribute more to their households.
- There was also a relationship between the number of children in a family and the perceived barriers to securing employment. If families had 3 or more male children or 2 or more female children living in the household this was perceived as a barrier to securing employment.
- Another relationship was found between the ages of children living in a family and the perceived barriers to securing employment. If the children in the family were under 3 years of age women found it more difficult to secure employment as presumably those children would have required childcare while the mother was at work.

In light of this research, Employers For Childcare would challenge the argument that carers are not 'involuntarily' out of the labour market. Because of their caring responsibilities, lack of affordable, accessible childcare precludes parents from taking advantage of job opportunities.

According to research carried out earlier this year by the Daycare Trust and the TUC *Women, child poverty and childcare: making the*

links Dr Hilary Land argues that social policy is still dominated by the male breadwinner model and that the dual earner model, or indeed households headed by a single parent, has been insufficiently recognised. Furthermore, lack of affordable childcare limits women's choices meaning they turn down work or promotion or work part-time to accommodate their caring responsibilities. All of these strategies have a negative impact on lifetime earnings meaning women earn significantly less per hour than men, make less pension provision and are more likely to experience poverty in old age (*Britain's competitive edge: women - unlocking the potential* EOC 2004; *Pensions: challenges and choices* Chapter 8 Pensions Commission 2004). We therefore feel that carers should be included as indicators in this domain.