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Street-level Bureaucratic Behaviour when Supporting Parents
Exploring the utility of the Jewell and Glaser framework

A thesis submitted for the Degree of PhD to the
National University of Ireland, Galway

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FEBRUARY 2015
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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Overview: policy implementation

In the 1970s, policy implementation became a focal point in public policy analysis, if not the focal point. It has been argued that this period marked the beginning of implementation research (Winter, 2003a). For approximately twenty years afterwards, studies emerged which tended to emphasise the importance of what happens after a policy is made, when it is put into action. This focus emerged in part from a deep dissatisfaction with perceived policy failures of large-scale public programmes in the United States in the 1960s; identified goals had not been achieved to the extent intended, if at all. Analysts, scholars, evaluators and administrators all became concerned with why a policy failed as opposed to what the outcome of a policy was supposed to be (Barrett, 2004). People began to write about implementation deficits (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973), implementation gaps (Dunsire, 1978) and implementation being the ‘missing link’ of policy analysis (Hargrove, 1975). This is not to say that implementation was not written about or examined prior to the 1970s; it was, but the term ‘implementation’ was not necessarily used, nor was it isolated as a distinct point of analysis (Hill and Hupe, 2002). Reasons for its emergence in the 1970s included that governments were becoming increasingly concerned with the delivery of public services (Barrett, 2004), and that the traditional model of public administration was breaking down, and with it the Weberian perception of administrators as neutral, faithful operationalisers of political decision-making (Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman, 1981; Parsons, 1995; Hughes, 2004).

This fertile period for implementation studies gave rise, initially at least, to two perspectives. The first, labelled the top-down approach, was proposed by a number of authors but led by Pressman and Wildavsky as set out in their book Implementation (1973). The book had two subtitles, the first of which stated ‘how great expectations in Washington are dashed in Oakland’. Oakland is in California, thousands of miles away from
Washington where federal programmes – the implementation of which was the focus of the book – were formulated. Although not the first text to deal with the issue of policy implementation, it is viewed as having the strongest impact (Parsons, 1995), especially as it was perceived to offer a ‘how-to’ guide to policy makers interested in ensuring that implementation ‘deficits’ were overcome. This emphasis on top-down or command and control approaches would be furthered by other scholars in later years who offered analyses of policy failure and who identified factors leading to successful implementation (Van Meter and Van Horn, 1975; Hood, 1976; Bardach, 1977; Sabatier and Mazmanian, 1979; Hogwood and Gunn, 1984).

In essence, many of these works also offered prescriptions or ‘how-to’ guides for the control of policy implementation so that defined goals could be achieved.

However, other policy scholars, both in the United States and the United Kingdom, were thinking about implementation in a different way. Where top-down theorists tended to take a more prescriptive or normative perspective about how ‘to do’ implementation, bottom-up theorists argued that the best way to understand implementation was to look at what was actually happening on the ground, at the ‘street-level’. Michael Lipsky’s (1971) work predated Pressman and Wildavsky’s publication, but his nascent theory of street-level bureaucracy evolved into a seminal publication by 1980, prompting an expansion of bottom-up analysis of policy implementation. Elmore (1979) developed his backward mapping approach, arguing that policy makers needed to appreciate the structures on the ground, and the conflict between, and behaviours of, implementers, when developing policy. Others, such as Barrett and Fudge (1981) challenged the classic or ‘stagist’ view of policy formulation and implementation being two separate and distinct processes, instead viewing both as constantly being in dialogue. Common to bottom-up theories (although not exclusive to them) is the view that politics occurs at the implementation level, amongst interest groups whose actions significantly
impact the policy itself as received by citizens, not just the implementation process. Despite these other contributions, however, it was Lipsky’s work which anchored the bottom-up approach and it is arguably his work which has endured more than others (Brandon, 2005; Kosar, 2011).

In the 1980s, a third approach to implementation emerged which sought to combine top-down and bottom-up perspectives. Within this approach, scholars sought to develop ‘whole-of-policy approaches’ such as the advocacy coalition approach (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993) or distinguish between horizontal and vertical networks (O’Toole, 1989). Others sought to move beyond the top-down/bottom-up perspective altogether, instead identifying particular policies, factors or contexts which could determine the best point of analysis. In this latter regard, Matland (1995) did not seek to blend approaches but rather urged the analyst to assess the extent to which the policy being implemented was characterised by conflict and/or ambiguity and then utilise either the top-down or bottom-up approach accordingly. This idea of selecting different approaches or methods, dependent on what type of policy is being examined, or what particular aspect of the implementation process is of interest, permitted a comfortable coexistence of different approaches in the toolbox of the implementation analyst.

While interest in the analysis of policy implementation may have declined by the 1990s, the pervasive use of the street-level perspective in scholarly work has caused it to be labelled as “one of the key concepts of public policy analysis” (Osborne, 2002, p. 2). One of the central contributions of Lipsky’s work was the emphasis it placed on the role of the individual bureaucrat in the policy process. Through examining the work patterns of those at the frontline engaging with citizens in delivering public services, Lipsky argued that street-level bureaucrats were actually policy makers. In striving to cope with a range of competing pressures – managerial, client, workload, regulatory – these bureaucrats develop a set of coping mechanisms which often distort the intentions of the policy they are
required to implement. They use their discretion to selectively choose or ‘cream’ clients, ration services and prioritise certain tasks (Winter, 2003b). Policy becomes what is actually done by the implementer, not necessarily what was devised by the policy maker.

Debates in street-level implementation analysis have often centred on the exercise and extent of discretion of street-level bureaucrats and mechanisms through which such discretion can be controlled (Meyers and Vorsanger, 2003). As such, implementation research has tended to expand Lipsky’s work and focus on what influences the behaviour of these bureaucrats when implementing different policy types or particular measures across a wide range of areas, such as chemical regulation (Johannson, 2010), road construction (Johannson, 2012), immigration (Bastien, 2009), veterinary practices (Thomann, 2014), relationship breakdown (Hasson, 2004), social work (Musil et al., 2004; Evans, 2011; 2013), family welfare conferencing (Vesneski, 2009), disability schemes (Keiser, 2010), Forestry services (Trusty and Cervany, 2012), HIV testing (Garrow and Grusky, 2012), and arts and culture policy (McCall, 2012).

Activation aspects of welfare reform policies have received particular attention in the literature in various countries, such as Sweden (Thorén, 2008), Denmark (May and Winter, 2009), Australia and Denmark (Marston, Elm Larson and MacDonald, 2005), the United States, Germany and Sweden (Jewell, 2007) and the various states within the United States (Brodkin, 1997; Meyers, Glaser and MacDonald, 1998; Jewell and Glaser, 2006). While each of these studies has identified various factors which, to varying degrees, play a role in street-level bureaucratic behaviour, only one has sought to develop a theoretical framework for exploring implementation in different contexts, drawing on street-level bureaucratic theory and primary research on the implementation of welfare reform (Jewell and Glaser, 2006).
Jewell and Glaser’s (2006) framework outlines six different organisational-related factors which they suggest influence street-level behaviour in the implementation of policies: workload; client contact; authority; knowledge and expertise; incentives; and role expectation. They developed the framework by examining street-level behaviour in the implementation in California of activation policies, a policy with a clear unambiguous goal: move welfare recipients off benefits and into employment. Towards the end of their work, when recommending areas for future research, they suggested that the framework be tested in different policy settings. This study takes up that call: it seeks to explore the utility of the framework in a different policy context, one which is far less clear, with goals far more ambiguous than those which underpin activation policies. The study will use the framework to explore the behaviour of family support workers as street-level bureaucrats when implementing parenting and family support policy in Ireland.

1.2. Policy context: family and parenting support in Ireland

“Parenting is an onerous task. Frequently parents have to cope under considerable pressure, sometimes alone. During the last few years there has been some increase in the number and type of family support services available [...] We recommend the extension of these community based schemes” (McGuinness, 1993, p.111).

In 1993, one of the most significant documents on child and family welfare in modern Irish history was published. The Kilkenny Incest Investigation report, authored by a team led by then Senior Counsel Catherine McGuinness, documented the interaction of state services with a family where a girl was subjected to physical and sexual abuse at the hands of her father and who, at the age of 15, gave birth to his child. On reviewing the case, McGuinness made numerous recommendations across a range of issues, from constitutional change, to confidentiality, to prevention programmes for children and young people. Amongst these recommendations was that outlined in the quote above, the extension of
family and parenting support services which served to support families, parents and parenting. Another called for the full implementation of the Child Care Act 1991, which provided for, amongst other things, the delivery of family support services by or on behalf of the State. McGuinness noted that the implementation of such measures would require adequate resources as well as training and information for practitioners. In particular, she noted that regular professional consultation and support for practitioners working with children and families was essential.

Five years after the publication of the Kilkenny Incest Investigation report, the Commission on the Family (1998) report Strengthening Families for Life was published. It highlighted, amongst other things, the importance of family support, parent education and the need more generally to invest in preventative services. Although there were a number of services available for families who required support, the Commission’s report gave rise to a number of institutional and service developments. The Family Support Agency was established in 2003 which, amongst other things, funds family and community resource centres in disadvantaged areas of Ireland. The Springboard initiative emerged to target families at-risk and provide for their needs through family support programmes.

In the 21st century, there is little doubt that parenting has very much become a topic of public discussion. In a series of public fora in 2003, it was identified as one of the key challenges of modern Irish family life and one which parents themselves said they needed support with. Specific issues mentioned ranged from knowing the appropriate age to let children go to a disco, to addressing the difficulties in asserting adequate parental authority, to societal pressures and related accusations of bad parenting (Daly, 2004). This need for support has been met in some ways through modern media. Today, two main broadsheet newspapers in the State, The Irish Times and The Irish Independent have weekly parenting sections where questions are answered and general topics covered by way of feature pieces. Day time radio shows have weekly parenting slots, where
psychologists answer questions sent in by listeners. Book shops have sections devoted to parenting. There are various websites – domestic and international – dedicated to parenting, permitting anyone to pass on advice or access it.

However, there are families in Ireland whose family and parenting support needs are not met by mainstream media. The HSE’s national reviews of adequacy of child and family services indicate a persistent need for family support services provided by the State. These reports indicate families often require a range of services to meet a variety of family needs, such as “basic parenting support, financial assistance, inadequate housing, relationship traumas and educational and learning skills which can adversely affect their parenting capacities” (HSE, 2011, p. 10).

Research exists which complements this view and which reflects the varied nature of family and parenting support provision in Ireland. There are a huge number of different parenting support programmes being implemented for more than twenty years across the country (Ryland, 1995; French, 1998) along with an extensive suite of family support services (McKeown and Haase, 2004), but with no national policy direction regarding family and parenting support, unlike in other countries (Daly, 2013; Featherstone 2004; Millar, 2006). One national study of Irish family support services (Brady, Dolan and Canavan, 2004) sought to capture and explore a selection of good practices around the country so as to inform national policy for the then Department of Health and Children, but nothing emerged by way of a clear statement on family and parenting support. While documents released from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs suggests that a national policy statement on family and parenting support is imminent (DCYA, 2014), services continue to operate where policy is, at best, ambiguous. Given such ambiguity, local decision-making and implementation varies greatly (PA Consulting, 2009) and can be viewed as local and experimental (Matland, 1995).
Child and Family Services in Mayo and Roscommon are examples of such local variation and experimentation. In 2006, both counties collectively imported a particular approach to working with children and families from the Boys Town organisation in the United States. Known as the family preservation approach, and locally labelled Mol an Óige¹, it seeks to put a structure on the process of doing family and parenting support at an organisational level, and in engaging with parents and children. It is specifically this example of local variation, of experimental implementation, which provides the basis for the exploration of street-level behaviour and examining the utility of the Jewell and Glaser framework.

But what do Irish family support workers do? A small-scale study of family support workers in the East of Ireland was published in 1998. Purely descriptive in nature, the study described the main tasks these workers (then lay workers) undertook: parental support, parenting skills, play, advocacy, socialisation activities, building social networks, budgeting, morning school routines, and practical skills such cooking and shopping (Scallan et al., 1998, cited in Gilligan, 1999). A similar study of Irish child and family welfare professionals across a range of disciplines undertaken in 2006 (Dolan and Holt, 2010) sought to examine what workers were doing, what they felt they should be doing, and what they could not do. This study seeks to expand this knowledge base through exploring not just what family support workers do, but how their activities are affected, not just by the relationship they have with the families they work with, but by the organisation that they work for, and the managers they work with and for, when implementing family and parenting support.

¹ Mol an Óige is an Irish phrase and means Praise (the) Youth.
1.3. Rationale for the study and research questions

1.3.1. Why undertake this study?
Jewell and Glaser (2006) argue that, in examining what goes on in the implementation of any policy at the street level, focusing on a range of factors will aid the researcher in analysing street-level behaviour. However, they call on researchers to test the framework in different contexts, to use it to explore its utility, especially where “worker-client interactions matter” (Jewell and Glaser, 2006, p. 354), such as child protection, mental health services and hospital emergency departments. This study is a response to that call and aims to fill this gap. Specifically, it seeks to explore the utility of the Jewell and Glaser framework in analysing the implementation of a different policy in a different context, namely Irish family and parenting support policy.

In addition, policy implementation research continues to suffer from the prevalence of single case study research with little attempt to draw general inferences from different contexts (Thomann, 2014; Winter, 2003a; 2003b). In examining the utility of the framework in a different policy context, the study seeks to contribute to a greater general understanding of what influences street-level behaviour in the implementation process. Irish family support policy differs significantly from the activation policies of California, the policy context from which the framework was derived. Where the latter had specific objectives and goals, the field of family and parenting support policy is more nebulous, its aims and objectives are vague or ambiguous. Despite the impetus provided by the Kilkenny Incest Investigation report, and subsequent scandals such as the Roscommon Child Care case (The Inquiry Team, 2010), a policy vacuum still exists.

In exploring the behaviour of Irish family support workers in ‘doing’ family support, the study also seeks to identify what influences street-level behaviour when policies are ambiguous. Street-level bureaucratic theory posits that where policies are ambiguous, bureaucrats have even more power to exercise discretion as it is difficult for managers to determine
whether they are implementing a policy or not (Bastien, 2009; Keiser, 2003; Thorén, 2008). Where policy goals are clear, supervision and guidance can be finely tuned to support the achievement of those goals. However, where policy is ambiguous, where goals are conflicting and/or vague, supervision becomes almost futile as managers and workers come into conflict about what the goals of activity should be: “the less clear the goals [...] the more will individuals in a bureaucracy be on their own” (Lipsky, 1980, p. 40).

Through analysing the development and current standing of family and parenting support policy in Ireland, this study will (a) demonstrate how it is ambiguous, using both Rainey and Jung’s (2010) and Matland’s (1995) definitions of policy ambiguity, resulting in ‘experimental implementation’ at the local level, and (b) explore how the ambiguous nature of the policy relates to activity in ‘delivering’ family support with families at the street-level. As far as I am aware, and could discover, there has been no street-level analysis of Irish family and parenting support undertaken before. As such, in line with a bottom-up perspective, examining how workers’ activities are mediated by a range of factors has the potential to provide a useful picture of what a putative family and parenting support policy might be required to address.

There is another reason to undertake this work. It is argued that Irish scholarship has “quite an underdeveloped tradition of public policy analysis” and that “the study of public policy-making and implementation is not a prominent feature of the Irish social and political sciences” (MacCarthaigh, 2013, p.91). Despite attempts to previously fill this gap, at least in the decision-making sphere (Adshead and Millar, 2003a; Adshead, Kirby and Millar, 2008; Taylor, 2005), implementation analysis has remained something of an afterthought. While the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) was established in 1993 to, amongst other things, monitor the implementation of social inclusion measures arising from
Ireland’s social partnership agreements, its tendency to undertake implementation analysis arose only in its twilight years, with a focus on the implementation of home care packages (NESF 2009a), child literacy and social inclusion (NESF, 2009b), amongst others.

This is not to say that there have not been academic studies of policy implementation in Ireland; there have. Historically, however, these have tended to focus on the implementation of EU environmental policy, both by Irish and international scholars (Bugdahn, 2005; Connaughton, 2014; Coyle, 1994; Flynn, 2009; Flynn and Kröger, 2003) and very recently on the non-implementation of mental health policy (Johnston, 2014). More specifically, street-level analyses of the implementation of Irish policy are virtually absent. Two recent doctoral studies have used the street-level concept to varying degrees to explore other research questions (more so in James’ (2011) examination of what integration means in youth work practice, less so in Connolly’s (2013) analysis of the impact of new public management principles on administrative culture) but no other published Irish work in the street-level vein could be uncovered in the course of preparing for this study. Thus, this research fills a gap in scholarship on the Irish policy process by delivering a street-level influenced analysis of Irish policy implementation.

The rationale for this study also derives from a now longstanding interest in public administration. I began my professional life in academia, researching, lecturing and writing on aspects of Irish public policy and administration (Coen, 2002; Evans and Coen, 2003). In 2006, I joined the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre at NUI Galway, where my work mainly centred on undertaking different types of evaluations of policies and services for children and families. At an academic level, the position

---

2 Social partnership was the phrase used in Ireland for a series of neo-corporatist agreements from 1987-2008. The agreements initially addressed core economic concerns but broadened in the mid-1990s to incorporate a range of groups across the community and voluntary sectors alongside existing business, union, farming and government representatives, to address a range of issues, social and economic (see Roche and Cradden, 2003).
permitted me to explore how the public administration and family support literatures interacted, for example: in how interagency working affects the governance of ‘wicked issues’ such as domestic violence (Kearns and Coen, 2014); in how co-production offers a potential framework upon which the principle of partnership in family support can be operationalised (Coen and Kearns, 2013); in how the concept of outcomes can be used in policy development and the governance of children’s services (Canavan et al., 2009); and in exploring the use of research evidence in policy making for children and families and in its implementation, and how practice learning can influence the policy process (Higgins, Canavan and Coen, 2014). Most significantly perhaps, my evaluation work brought me into contact with the world of family support practice, a world which I had little knowledge of before 2006. I engaged regularly with workers, managers, parents and families. I heard testimony from these actors which raised questions regarding what form family and parenting support policy takes on the ground, how it is framed, how its implementation occurs, what supports it and what impedes it.

1.3.2. Research question
Taking all these considerations together, the overarching research question for this study is:

Is the Jewell and Glaser framework useful in exploring the impact of organisational context on street-level bureaucratic behaviour when an ambiguous policy - namely family and parenting support - is being implemented in an Irish context?

To answer this question, it is necessary to break it down into constituent and sequential parts:

a) How is family and parenting support policy in Ireland ambiguous?

Using Matland’s (1995) conceptualisation of policy ambiguity and its subsequent impact on implementation analysis, this study will explore the development and current standing of Irish policy in relation to children and families. In the analysis, I will characterise family support policy as
ambiguous regarding the explicit goals of the policy, but not of its means. I will show how a conducive policy environment established a situation where experimental implementation occurred at a local level, where local responses were developed to family support needs. The case study, the implementation of a family and parenting support approach in two counties in the west of Ireland, will be introduced as an example of such local, experimental implementation. Analysis of the national policy context and data from key informants and case file analysis will contribute to the characterisation of the local implementation context as experimental, indicative in Matland’s framework of high policy ambiguity and low policy conflict.

b) What is the relationship between street-level bureaucratic behaviour and organisational factors (three of the six factors of the Jewell and Glaser framework) when implementing family and parenting support?

For the purpose of presenting the data, the Jewell and Glaser framework is split into two groups of factors. The first group relates to specific organisational factors which impact on the work of street-level bureaucrats. These are: knowledge and expertise; resources; and incentives. This question will be answered through the use of both qualitative and quantitative data from street-level workers, and qualitative data from their managers.

c) What is the relationship between street-level bureaucratic behaviour and client factors (the remaining three of the six factors of the Jewell and Glaser framework) when implementing family and parenting support?

This second group relates more to how service-user factors impact on the work of street-level bureaucrats. The three factors are: workload; client contact; and authority. This question will also be answered through the use of both qualitative and quantitative data from street-level workers, and qualitative data from their managers.
1.3.3. Answering the research question
The study is grounded in an evaluation of the implementation of the Mol an Óige approach in the counties of Mayo and Roscommon. The evaluation sought to examine the impact of the approach on children and families, as well as on staff practice. As a result, the methodology for the study is drawn heavily from that of the evaluation and is grounded in a modern realist perspective. It adopts a mixed methods approach to answering the research question, with a heavy reliance on qualitative data techniques. For the study, 24 street-level bureaucrats – family support workers – and seven supervisors were interviewed, along with a number of key informants involved in developing the approach in the local context. It also presents quantitative data from 24 questionnaires administered to street-level workers pre and post implementation of Mol an Óige. This data enhances the exploration of workers’ perceptions of the impact of particular factors on their behaviour in engaging with families. In addition, data from documentary analysis of case files and programme material are used to establish the context for the analysis.

Figure 1 below provides a graphical overview the research question, its constituent parts and the methods used.
1.4. Structure of the thesis

As set out above, this study aims to explore the utility of the Jewell and Glaser framework in analysing street-level behaviour in a different policy and service context, namely the implementation of an approach to family and parenting support in the west of Ireland. As such, the thesis is structured in a manner which sets out existing knowledge on what structures street-level behaviour, and more generally on family and parenting support in Ireland, before presenting the findings from the study. Following from this introductory chapter, which has provided an overview of the study, there are seven further chapters.

Chapter two sets out and brings together a diverse set of literature related to the conceptual underpinnings of the study. It is split into two main parts. The first part explores the literature on public policy analysis, and
specifically policy implementation. It sets out the main contributions to the field before focusing on street-level research, outlining what is known about the context of street-level behaviour. The section also examines the concept of ambiguity in public policy and implementation literature. The second section surveys the literature on family and parenting support as a theoretical and policy concept, providing a basis for the characterisation of the policy work which family support workers do when implementing Mol an Óige.

The methodology for the study is outlined in chapter three. It describes the context for the study – an evaluation – before describing the methodological approach taken and the particular methods used. The policy context of the study is set out in chapter four. It outlines the nature of family policy and its historical development in Ireland, before narrowing its focus onto family and parenting support. It proceeds to describe the evolution of family and parenting support services and their current status. It highlights the absence of any clear goals regarding family and parenting support policy, and provides important policy context for the findings chapters.

The findings of the study are contained in the next three chapters. Chapter five details the evolution of the Mol an Óige programme in Mayo and Roscommon, utilising the ambiguity concept to characterise the implementation context for Mol an Óige. It presents data from interviews with key informants who played a role in bringing it to the children and family services in the counties and sets out how the absence of any national policies relating to family and parenting support contributed to a scenario where local managers could effectively develop services in local, particularistic and experimental ways. It also presents programme data about the nature of the work being undertaken with families by workers and service data about the organisations delivering the programme.
Chapters six and seven are concerned with examining the utility of the framework. Chapter six examines the first set of factors from the framework, namely knowledge, incentives and role expectations, factors which are characterised as being organisation-related. Chapter seven examines authority, workload and client contact, factors which relate more to the street-level workers’ interactions with service users. Both chapters utilise interview data from street-level workers and their managers and, to a lesser extent, survey data from street-level workers to address the utility aspect of the research question.

Chapter eight concludes the study. It brings together the key evidence presented in the previous three chapters with the existing knowledge about street-level bureaucratic behaviour to assess the utility of the Jewell and Glaser framework in examining the implementation of family and parenting support policy in Ireland. It identifies the contribution to knowledge that the study makes and concludes by making recommendations for policy, practice and further research.
Chapter Two: Literature review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter is concerned with three key areas relating to this study. The first area and section addresses the development of policy implementation as a focus of study and a sub-discipline of inquiry within policy studies. Implementation is viewed as having three schools or approaches: top-down, bottom-up and hybrid. This Chapter will examine each school, but will pay particular attention to the work of bottom-up theorists. Both top-down and hybrid schools will be briefly outlined, key theorists and contributions delineated. However, the nature of policy activity at the ‘street-level’ is central to this study, and thus bottom-up approaches require more in-depth explanation than the other two schools. The work of Michael Lipsky (1980) in particular will be discussed prior to the introduction of the Jewell and Glaser framework, which is central to the research question of the study.

The second key area discussed in the chapter is the concept of ambiguity. The term has particular connotations when examined in political science and public administration. The use of ambiguity in politics is briefly explored before its role in policy, and specifically policy implementation, is outlined. Of particular importance here is Matland’s (1995) model of analysing implementation in policy sectors characterised by varying degrees of ambiguity and conflict. This model will frame the analysis of the implementation of the particular policy chosen for this study: family and parenting support.

The chapter then proceeds to provide an account of family and parenting support as a policy and practice concept, set within the broader context of family support. It will provide an analysis of competing definitions of the term, identify key values underpinning it in countries outside Ireland and some of the key debates in its evolution. The chapter concludes with a summary reflecting on the three areas covered.
2.2. Approaches to implementation analysis

While a focus on issues pertaining to public policy was a feature of the writings of Plato (Sharkansky, 1972), it is generally recognised that three particular schools or approaches to implementation analysis developed from the 1970s onwards (Kaplan and Corbett, 2003; Winter, 2006): top-down; bottom-up; and hybrid approaches. Cutting across each of these approaches are competing views of the policy process. One perspective, the stagist approach, has its roots in the classics of public administration, and in particular, the Wilsonian dichotomy of politics and administration (Wilson, 1887). The dichotomy suggests that politicians make policy and administrators implement it, or more subtly, perhaps, junior civil servants implement policy which senior civil servants support politicians to formulate (Hill, 2005). Another, much broader, perspective sees the stagist view as a fallacy, giving the false impression that policy is neatly segmented and linear (Nakamura, 1987; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993; 1999). These scholars instead view the policy process as a whole system, where implementation and formulation are not – cannot be – detached from each other, where the administrative and political processes are inextricably linked (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993).

Despite such criticisms, the stagist approach is a useful heuristic tool. It “imposes some order on the research process” (John, 1998, p.36). In their treatise on implementation, Hill and Hupe (2002; 2009) highlight that what is required in any study of public policy – let alone policy implementation – is an appreciation of the potential utility of combining the “analytical benefits offered by the ‘stages’ model with a recognition of the interaction between stages” (Hill and Hupe, 2009, p.8). Therefore, while we can appreciate that policy making is a fluid process, for analytical purposes we can still break the process down to gain a better understanding of it before building it back up (see also Parsons, 1995).
2.2.1. Top-down approaches

Top-down approaches have their origins in the early studies of United States federal programmes, and in particular their (mis)management. These analyses largely focused on narratives of policy failure and financial corruption (Kaplan and Corbett, 2003). The perceived ‘failure’ of the great programmes of 1960s American governments caused scholars and a sceptical public to question why things had not turned out as planned. Studies of this period tended to examine small and not-so-small examples of local translations of national policy. At the forefront in this period was Pressman’s and Wildavsky’s seminal 1973 publication, titled Implementation with the explanatory subtitle of ‘How Great Expectations in Washington are Dashed in Oakland’. ³

Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) identified a number of factors which affected implementation. These included: the passage of time in which circumstances changed and goals were altered; the number of links in the causal chain, the more of which there were the greater the chance there was of implementation deficit; an absence of action; inordinate time delays; aspirations being set too high; and the ‘complexity of joint action’ (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973, p.xxii). While viewed as atheoretical (Pülzl and Treib, 2006), Pressman and Wildavsky’s work was important simply for putting implementation on the policy map as a justifiable area of inquiry in its own right, thus warranting the authors the moniker of the pioneers of implementation studies. Their legacy can be found in subsequent works which attempted to provide ‘how to’ guides to secure effective implementation. Hood (1976), Gunn (1978) and Hogwood and Gunn (1984) all sought to identify a number of conditions which contributed to perfect implementation, or that made it unattainable. Others prescribed how effective implementation could be ‘ensured’

³ The book had a further subtitle: Or, Why It’s Amazing That Federal Programs Work At All This Being A Saga of The Economic Development Administration As Told By Two Sympathetic Observers Who Seek To Build Morals on a Foundation of Ruined Hopes.
(Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1981), or how the implementation process could be fixed in a series of political games (Bardach, 1977).

Others sought to develop more sophisticated theories of implementation than had been found up to that point. Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) proposed a model of the ‘policy delivery’ system which outlined a series of stages working towards an outcome, ‘performance’. Within the delivery system special attention was paid to the critical role of the implementer in the entire process. The implementer’s understanding of the policy, whether they rejected, accepted or were indifferent to it, and the intensity of the position they took on it, was viewed as critical to the process of turning policy into ‘performance’. Their impact on implementation studies is largely in their identification of a number of variables, including the implementer, which can affect the process. They put forward a how-to-analyse model of implementation as opposed to a how-to-do checklist for implementation (Hill and Hupe, 2009, p.47).

2.2.2. Bottom-up critiques
In response to top-down approaches a critique emerged which placed greater emphasis on the role of lower level bureaucrats - often termed street-level actors – and more broadly on “patterns of influence in organisations [challenging] the view that implementation is fundamentally a question of whether policy decisions made at a high level were implemented at a lower level” (Kaplan and Corbett, 2003, p.62). For these proponents of the bottom-up perspective, both a positivist and normative account of policy making was offered. Notwithstanding the problems of the stagist approach, these scholars perceived policy making as a process which should begin with the problem experienced at the ground level by citizens informing the development of any subsequent policy. Descriptively, these theorists viewed street-level bureaucrats as experiencing “a gap between the demands made on them by legislative mandates, managers and citizens on the one side and their high workload on the other” (Winter, 2006, p.153). In this regard, Lipsky and colleagues
perceived such individuals as not only affecting policy formulation but actually ‘doing’ policy formulation through their actions.

Richard Elmore made a significant contribution to implementation analysis with his concept of backward mapping (Elmore, 1979). Firmly rooted in the bottom-up tradition, backward mapping has both normative and analytical connotations. He suggests it can be a prescriptive way of formulating and implementing policy (the way it ought to be done) and also be used as an analytical tool to explain why policy outcomes come about. Backward mapping rejects the extent to which policy makers can – or indeed should – affect or control the process at all. It begins with the identification of a behaviour, the emergence of a problem or issue at the point where “administrative actions intersect with private choices” (1979, p.604), which requires a policy to be developed to address it.

Unlike top-down theorists, Elmore embraces worker discretion and the ability of those working at the street-level to be innovative and experimental in meeting the needs of people:

Standardised solutions, developed at great distance from the problem, are notoriously unreliable; policies that fix street-level behaviour in the interest of uniformity and consistency are difficult to adapt to situations that policy makers fail to anticipate. [.....In top-down models] there is little or no room for the exercise of special skills or judgement, not to mention deliberate invention and experimentation (Elmore, 1979, p.610).

For top-down theorists, success is measured by the extent to which outcomes achieved are akin to those desired in the policy. For bottom-up theorists, and Elmore in particular, such a measure is little more than a myth, with success requiring a definition which is far more human or behavioural in nature (Parsons, 1995, p.468).
2.2.2.1. Lipsky’s Street-Level Bureaucracy

Cited as the godfather of the bottom-up approach (Hill and Hupe, 2009), Michael Lipsky required that, to fully understand public policy and the implementation process, the nature of work undertaken by street-level bureaucrats when interacting with members of the public must be examined (Lipsky, 1971; 1980; Weatherley and Lipsky, 1977). Street-level bureaucrats are public sector workers who “interact directly with citizens in the course their jobs, and have substantial discretion in the execution of their work” (1980, p.3). Their potential to impact on the lives of citizens with whom they interact through their discretion, influence and actions, is extensive. Lipsky argued that street-level bureaucrats process their caseloads in ways developed to respond to the organisational context in which they work, where excessive caseloads and inadequate resources are the norm (Lipsky, 1980, pp.40-54), thus developing lower expectations of themselves and the clients they work with (Hill, 2005).

In response to these organisational pressures, coping methods are developed which explain, to a large degree, how policy is enacted, and, in many ways, how it is made. Street-level bureaucrats also actively work to change their role expectations, particularly the expectations related to their job definition. As such, street-level bureaucrats disclaim responsibility over the results or process of their work, and may in some cases attribute all responsibility to the service user, and use their characteristics to explain service failure or why they could not be helped. Indeed, street-level bureaucrats may even curtail or ration service access through particular mechanisms.

At the heart of street-level behaviour is the ability of workers to exercise discretion, from which much of the authority of the worker is derived (Lipsky, 1980, pp.13-16). While organisations may develop rules and procedures to maintain control over workers and prevent discretion, they

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4 Please note that this is a general overview of Lipksy’s thesis. Particular aspects of street-level bureaucracy as they apply to the factors of the framework under consideration for this study are examined in pages 42-73 below.
can be voluminous and contradictory to the extent that they impede effective oversight. Moreover, the problems encountered by workers require observation and appropriate, tailor-made responses, not a one-size-fits-all approach. They can act autonomously in other ways, such as through not sharing all case concerns with supervisors. More generally, the street-level bureaucrat – manager/supervisor relationship is conflictual but mutually dependent. Street-level bureaucrats desire to expand their autonomy while managers seek to delimit it. Where managers are interested in achieving agency goals, street-level bureaucrats work towards their own preferences and the requirements of their coping mechanisms, and only work towards agency goals where sanctions are clear. However, managers “are dependent on their hierarchical subordinates for the smooth functioning of their jobs” (1980, p.25). Thus reciprocity exists, with managers generally rewarding performance which contributes to their own jobs.

It has been argued that since Lipsky’s work, the role of frontline workers in the policy process, and in particular in policy implementation, has become a genuine and well-founded focus of study, especially when activities diverge from policy intentions (May and Winter, 2009; Meyers and Vorsanger, 2003; Meyers and Nielsen, 2012). Indeed, the centrality of his work in policy sciences may be underlined by a chapter devoted entirely to policy at street-level in later editions (2005; 2009) of Hill’s authoritative The Public Policy Process and the absence of his work from Lane’s (1993) comprehensive criticisms of different approaches to implementation analysis.

That is not to say that the street-level bureaucracy thesis is not without its critics. For Sabatier, and others, the notion of examining activity at the street-level alone limits the power of the approach as a complete explanatory framework for examining policy as it pays little attention to the broader context in which bureaucrats act (Sabaitier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999). While these hybrid theorists point to the notion of having an
appreciation of both the street-level and the executive level (Pülzl and Treib, 2007), others have pointed to the need to consider street-level work within a wider organisational context at the street level (Jewell and Glaser, 2006; Meyers, Glaser and MacDonald, 1998). Others again have highlighted that Lipsky’s notions of discretion and the low-level activity of clients do not always ring true in particular forms of human service work, for example where children and families are concerned (Evans and Harris, 2004; Howe, 1991, cited in Evans, 2011; deLeon and deLeon, 2002; Murray, 2006). Also, the sense that street-level bureaucrats and their managers are always in conflict has been challenged (Evans, 2011, 2013; May and Winter, 2007; Murray 2006).

2.2.3. Hybrid approaches
The bottom-up approach induced criticisms from a number of quarters. It was perceived as being unrealistic in its (over) emphasis on interaction at the street-level. To the fore here were Hogwood and Gunn (1984), who wrote that a focus on the ground level was warranted, but in reality political-hierarchical influence was still the main dependent variable in policy analysis, and thus a top-down approach was the way forward. This view is echoed by Sabatier (1986, p.31) who argued that the claim that policy making is blurred with policy implementation “is false and/or useless”.

In many ways, top-down and bottom-up approaches were speaking past each other rather than to each other, examining different variables and often working from different, competing premises. While some top-down theorists remained steadfast in their approach, others accepted and added to the bottom-up perspective (Maynard-Moody and Herbert’s (1989) contribution to administrative policymaking is of note here). Others again (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993; 1999) reconceptualised the policy process in its entirety, developing a policy systems approach which incorporated theories of power, institutions, actors and policy theories into one overarching integrative method, known as the advocacy coalition.
approach. The extent to which this validly remains an implementation theory is open to question, given its chief concern being policy change over periods of ten years or more (Winter, 2006). Others remained within a stagist approach, but moved to the centre ground, recognising the need to appreciate street-level factors and the nature of policy change (Majone and Wildavsky, 1979; Browne and Wildavsky, 1983). Elmore (1985) combined backward mapping with forward mapping. New hybrid contributors came to the fore, such as Goggin et al. (1990) with the communications model of implementation, and Winter (1990) with the integrated implementation model. Others, like May (2003) however, called for a more stringent emphasis on policy formulation.

Part of the increased debate on implementation analysis was the recognition of the appropriateness of particular ways, methods or approaches of looking at a situation dependent on different variables, for example the policy, the category of actor, the organisation, the setting. While these are often viewed as hybrid theories (Meyers and Vorsanger, 2003; Winter, 2006), others (Hill, 2005; Hill and Hupe, 2009; Parsons, 1995) argue that these are not so much hybrid theories but rather a variety of ways to determine the approach used – either top-down or bottom-up. Of particular note here is the mechanism of policy type in choosing the appropriate method of analysis. Matland (1995) devised a schema along these lines, stating that the approach to analysing implementation should be determined by characteristics of the policy, particularly the extent to which it is ambiguous and causes conflict.

2.3. The concept of ambiguity
Feldman (1989, p.5), in writing about information analysts working in bureaucracies, notes that ambiguity is “a state of having many ways of thinking about the same circumstances or phenomena”. These many different ways of thinking can result in numerous interpretations. Ambiguity is a notion central to different aspects of political life (Shepsle,
1972; Tomz and van Houweling, 2009; Zahariadis, 2003). In politics, Stone (2012) comments that ambiguity is more akin to emotion than hard, objective, ‘scientific’ matter, belonging more to the unpredictable world of passion, rather than the more reliable world of rationality. In this regard, she argues that ambiguity is the most vexing “law of passion”, where “things can mean, and therefore be, more than one thing at once” (Stone, 2002, p.31). The nature of ambiguity can serve to unite disparate groups and permit politicians to convince multiple, competing groups that they will get what they wish from the political process.

2.3.1. Ambiguity and the policy process
Jung (2011) highlights that ambiguous policies and programmes, and thus their associated goals, are themselves inevitable considering the political relationships which produce them and the processes associated with their implementation. Ambiguous policy goals leave “wriggle room” and lead to obfuscation serving institutional and political interests (Beeson and Bell, 2004). In conflating programmes and policies together as “the governmental activities formulated in response to an authoritative decision” (Matland 1995, p.154), Rainey and Jung (2010) tease out the notion of policy ambiguity. For these authors, ambiguity here is the degree to which a goal or group of goals of a policy allow room for interpretation: “when programme goals invite room for different interpretations, they are regarded as ambiguous” (Rainey and Jung, 2010, p.45).

In defining policy ambiguity, a number of specific elements are outlined:

- target specification – presence or absence of clarity regarding the amount and quality of work towards the achievement of a programme’s performance goals;
- time specification – presence or absence of clarity in distribution between annual and long-term goals; and
- evaluability specification – presence or absence of clarity regarding indicators of success.
The extent to which each of these is either clear or ambiguous is dependent on a number of antecedents: programme management capacity; programme planning capacity; policy type; programme size; assessment year; party affiliation to policy; and agency type (Rainey and Jung, 2010). Despite difficulties with the application of antecedents in a Westminster style system, this conceptualisation offers a useful way of thinking about ambiguity and the policy process.

2.3.2. Ambiguity and policy implementation

While the heuristic value of viewing policy as distinct stages is well rehearsed, as outlined above, the reality of policy making and implementation being a fluid process, often involving to-ing and fro-ing between making and doing, can mean that ambiguity in the policymaking process can seep into the implementation process easily. Baier, March and Sætren (1994 [1986]) make this precise point: “some conspicuous features of policymaking contribute directly to the phenomena we have come to label as problems of implementation” (p.161). Contrary to the advice given by top-down theorists of implementation, removing ambiguity from policy is not straightforward given the political process. Indeed, the “horsetrading” which Baier, March and Sætren (1994 [1986]) say characterises the political and policy process is expected by implementing agencies. In a more ambiguous policy world, “innovation flourishes because it gives new ideas a chance to be used to solve old problems [...] it affords the luxury of attending to many issues simultaneously” (Zahariadis 2003, p.168). While an entirely ambiguous world may be intolerable, a partly ambiguous one can be of great use. The sense of innovation or experimentation which ambiguity can foster is found in the work of Richard Matland.

5 For example, when the antecedent of party affiliation is considered, legislation could be less associated with political parties in other parliamentary and political systems. For example, it could be the result of such political compromise as to be too difficult to apportion to any political party. This is even more problematic when consociational government systems or consensual parliamentary systems are considered.
**Matland’s Conflict-Ambiguity Model of Policy Implementation**

Following the work of Baier, March and Saetren (1994 [1986]), Matland aimed to reconcile the top-down and bottom-up approaches in analysing implementation, but instead of trying to create a hybrid or third way model, wanted to “develop a model that explains when the two approaches are most appropriate” (1995, p153). In so doing, he utilises two concepts: policy conflict and policy ambiguity:

- **Policy conflict** can occur when there is disagreement over a policy’s goals or the means to achieve the goals. For conflict to exist, relevant actors must be interdependent, their objectives incompatible, and interaction being perceived as a zero-sum game. Organisations involved will have incongruous views on the policy;

- **Policy ambiguity** can occur when there is a lack of clarity about a policy’s goals or the means to achieve those goals. Goal ambiguity arises as a result of the political process. Ambiguity of means occurs when there is lack of clarity regarding which organisations are to play what roles in the implementation process, the appropriateness of mechanisms to be used to implement the policy, and their effectiveness.

Matland combines these concepts to produce a matrix which he believes is a first step towards putting structure on an ever-growing set of variables which were reckoned to explain policy outcomes across numerous studies of implementation. This matrix is set out in Figure 2 below:
In a low conflict–low ambiguity situation, there is clarity about the policy and the means to achieve it, and general agreement on it. Here, *administrative implementation* occurs. The desired outcomes of the policy are achieved through the appropriation of adequate resources and their management in a traditional, Weberian bureaucratic structure. In administrative implementation, *procedure* matters.

In a low ambiguity–high conflict situation, actors have clearly defined but different goals, along with different preferences about how to achieve those goals. In such a situation, implementation is determined by the extent and exercise of power and thus is labelled *political implementation*. In political implementation, *power* matters.

In high ambiguity–low conflict situations, outcomes – in so far as they can be predicted – are determined by the actors involved, their roles and the resources available to them. The context is central here. Such a scenario is labelled *experimental implementation*. In such situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AMBIGUITY</th>
<th>CONFLICT</th>
<th>Administrative Implementation</th>
<th>Political Implementation</th>
<th>Experimental Implementation</th>
<th>Symbolic Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Implementation outcomes are determined by resources; politically-led and developed, apolitically administered, with heavy emphasis on issues of technology; hierarchical manner of implementation. Top-down in nature, it requires a top-down method of analysis.</td>
<td>Implementation outcomes are determined by power exercised at the central level; actor and policy goals are clearly defined, but incompatible. There can be conflict also over the means to achieve policy goals. Bargaining and persuasion, as well as coercion, feature as characteristics. Top-down in nature, it requires a top-down method of analysis.</td>
<td>Implementation outcomes are determined by access to resources and coalition strength at local level; competition over vision is a feature throughout the process; ambiguity creates a vacuum which groups fill with their own vision, often drawn from professional norms. Both top-down and bottom-up methods of analysis due to nature of political aspect.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Matland’s (1995) conflict-ambiguity matrix of policy implementation
“the opportunities are excellent for bureaucratic entrepreneurs to create policies to deal with local needs” (Matland, 1995, p.166). Goals and/or means are ambiguous, and participation of actors varies greatly. Attention to what such actors do, their perceptions of the ‘policy’, other work pressures on them, resources available to them, and the specific things they do, all add to the understanding of what occurs in experimental situations. Formative evaluation plays a key role, as the accumulation of knowledge is central. In this regard, ambiguous policy is viewed as an opportunity to “learn about new means and new goals” (1995, p.167). In experimental implementation, process matters.

- Finally, in high ambiguity-high conflict situations, policies are contentious, despite being ambiguous, due to what is important or salient in the policy. Outcomes are determined by local coalitions and the resources they use which are available to them. Where highly contentious issues are bound up in an ambiguous policy, breaking down such a policy into smaller pieces of activity is contentious as well. Symbolic implementation results, where politics matters.

Despite criticisms, Matland’s model does offer “some important suggestions about the need to think about implementation as differing in relation to the varying character of the policies to be implemented” (Hill and Hupe, 2009, p.178). It is with this in mind that Matland is used in this study: his model offers a useful framework to think about the nature of policy issues and the contexts from which they emerge (policy making) and the contexts into which they are moved (implementation); it is a way of categorising them so as to deploy an appropriate approach for analysis. In this regard, the ambiguity-conflict model has been used in a variety of policy arenas to explore the impact of ambiguity on policy implementation, including administrative reform (Chackerian and Mavima, 2001), disability activation policies (Cohen, Timmons and Fesko, 2005) education (Howard, Wrobel and Nitta, 2010), children’s services (Hudson, 2006), adult
protection policies (McCredie et al., 2008), anti-terrorism policies (Bossong, 2008), and youth criminal justice (Cooley, 2011).

Working from Matland’s model, Hill (2003) identified that ambiguous policies can result in specific, additional uncertainties or challenges for implementers:

- uncertainty about what the policy actually means to them. As a result, they are required to extract meaning from whatever documents they are familiar with, which relate to the policy. They must interpret the policy documents in whichever way they can, both for themselves and their organisation. This is important for implementation research as “understanding agents’ understandings of policy is crucial to explaining implementation outcomes” (2003, p.268);
- uncertainty about how to translate what the policy might mean for them in their everyday work, ‘in practice’. Policies rarely come with an implementation handbook, and this is even more so the case when the policy is inadequately outlined. Street-level actors can experience the difficulties of not having sufficient or any knowledge of implementation technologies or paths, or about how to access them, or about choosing the right one;
- the challenge of expert knowledge. Maths teachers need to know different routes to reaching a solution to a problem, yet gaining such knowledge is dependent on support structures in their work to acquire such knowledge. Street-level bureaucrats can find it difficult to access knowledge which can impact directly on their work.

Notably, Hill (2003) advocates the development of implementation resources when implementing policies, particularly those which are ambiguous. In her words, the implementation story needs to “trace the development of implementers’ understanding, practices, and skills, rather
than focusing on the organisations and milieus in which they work” (2003, p.269).

2.4. Returning to the street-level: analysing the context of street-level behaviour

It is argued that since the publication of Lipsky’s work, and its application, it has been recognised that “any attempt to explain implementation must look within agencies at the factors that affect the behaviour of staff working at the street level” (Hill and Hupe, 2009, pp.150-51). To this end, the work of Bonnie Glaser, along with other colleagues, has been instrumental in examining street-level behaviour in cases where new programmes were being implemented. Meyers, Glaser and MacDonald (1998) explored the world of street-level work when activation policies were being implemented in California. They discovered that, contrary to the passive client in Lipsky’s work, the nature of client behaviour was a mediating factor in street-level behaviour. The activation policy was only fully implemented when clients asked particular questions and sought particular supports. An absence of cooperation at the frontline, and across the frontline with clients, resulted in uneven implementation and a failure to provide resources equitably to all.

This thinking was extended significantly by Jewell and Glaser (2006) when they developed an organisational framework for analysing street-level behaviour in an organisational context. Developed out of an analysis of street-level actor behaviour in the context of implementing activation policies in California, the Jewell and Glaser framework (2006) argues that implementation at the street-level is influenced by how the workers’ jobs are structured by their organisation’s settings. For these authors, illuminating the “organisational black box” through providing a framework to assess implementation by case workers offers great potential to researchers and evaluators. In developing the framework they seek to extend the understanding of street-level behaviour by arguing that, while
individual worker agency is important, it “does not mean, however, that workers are unconstrained in what they do or that their behaviour is largely individualistic or idiosyncratic. Rather, patterns do develop, but they depend on the actual contextual incentives and constraints that emerge from organisational processes” (2006, pp.338-9). In trying to account for one environmental influence – that of organisation, their framework comprises the following factors as outlined Figure 3 below (2006, pp.341-2):

*Figure 3: Jewell and Glaser (2006) framework for street-level bureaucratic analysis*

Each factor is now discussed in detail, alongside relevant literature from policy implementation studies pertaining to it.

**2.4.1. Role expectation**
For Jewell and Glaser, *role expectation* is specifically defined as “how the mission and values of a programme, as they are communicated to staff, become embodied in the worker’s perceptions of and attitudes towards their work and their clients” (2006, p.341). In essence, the authors argue that the term captures what workers think their role in the implementation
process is, and what their perceptions of and attitudes towards their work and their clients are. In their analysis of the implementation of welfare-to-work policies, the authors question how workers’ role expectations align with the goal of the programme being implemented. They find variety present in the conceptualisation of workers’ roles in working towards the policy goal of client employment. On the one hand, they found generalists who did not see their role as promoting client employment, but rather viewed their work in narrow technical terms, related to assessing and determining the eligibility of clients. On the other hand, there were workers who did focus directly on the goal of client employment, mainly out of concern about new time limits on eligibility for welfare payments and their impact on clients.

Lipsky’s conceptualisation of role expectation draws heavily on earlier works on role theory. For him, role expectations (1980, p.45-48) are socially constructed by: a worker’s peers; a worker’s reference group, such as managers and other individuals in their work (but not clients); and to a lesser extent, society and the perceived importance or otherwise by the general public of the work they undertake. These sources combine to permit, to varying degrees, space for the street-level worker to identify their own objectives and role expectations. In the main, Lipsky’s street-level bureaucrat enters public service as a vocation, with a sense of commitment to public good and helping individuals and families. However, given the extreme pressures they experience, the workers “develop conceptions of their work and of their clients that narrow the gap between their personal and work limitations, and the service ideal” (Lipsky, 1980, p.xiii). Ambiguous policy directives permit workers to characterise what they do as implementing the policy as they perceive it, when in fact their actions constitute the policy itself (Lipsky, 1980, pp 13-25; Brodkin, 2003).

This point about perception is found in the work of Spillane (2000) and Spillane, Reiser and Reime (2002), who argued that in creating a greater understanding of how policy is implemented at the local level, researchers
are required to examine what street-level workers take from a particular policy and programme when implementing it. Such a requirement is borne out in existing literature. Cohen, (1990) identified that teachers’ interpretation of new reading programmes in schools in the US in the 1980s influenced the implementation process. Teachers tended to implement elements of programmes which closely aligned with their own views of their roles as they had developed through their careers (Cohen, 1990, cited in Hill, 2003). Similarly, Lin (2000, cited in Meyers and Vorsanger, 2003) found that when new policies were introduced in US prisons, their implementation diverged from the intended goals because prison officers did not see them fitting with their personal frame of reference or the organisational one. Winter (2002) discovered that workers’ attitudes towards aspects of the policy that they were implementing had the effect of reducing coping (steps taken to reduce service to manage excessive workload). Positive views on developing action plans for newly-arrived immigrants correlated with a reduction in coping.

Much has been written about the role of professionals as street-level bureaucrats in implementing public and social policies. Parsons (1995, p.469) notes that, more so than ordinary street-level bureaucrats, professionals have a particular role to play in the implementation process through their ability to control delivery by way of the skills they have. Hill (2005) notes that professionalism is often a source of power within bureaucratic organisations. This power is sourced via access to expertise and knowledge, and brings with it an ability to influence how policy is implemented, largely free from monitoring and supervision.

It is important to note that in the Jewell and Glaser framework, professionals are not considered. In their study, Jewell and Glaser examined the role of lower level administrative staff in developing their framework. However, this study examines the role played by professionals in implementing a policy, and an ambiguous one at that. Implicit in such an
analysis is the place and exercise of professionalism – culture, values and skills – in the policy (implementation) process. Professionals, like those found in the social care field, can bring a sympathy and understanding to individual cases, skills which a clerk or lower level administrator might not have (Weissert, 1994).

In relation to role expectation specifically, Ellis (2011) and Evans (2011) both note that Lipksy’s thesis pays little attention to the specific role of professionalism in street-level bureaucracy. For Evans (2011), while Lipsky talks about professionals generally, he fails to engage fully with what professionalism means, such as: having an ideology focused on service users and their goals, rather than economic priorities; a (greater) degree of control over their own work than other street-level bureaucrats; and an engagement with managers which may be less conflictual than portrayed due to shared assumptions and ethical values about work. This last aspect is a central feature of bureau-professionalism, a term used to describe the organisation of professional-led and managed social services within a traditional bureaucratic structure (Newman and Clarke, 1997).

For, Ellis (2011), Lipsky discounts the possibility of value-based discretion in determining what gets implemented. In her work on different paradigms in social care in the UK, she notes that bureau-professionals influence the implementation process through exercising their professional identity and power to negotiate rules and tasks. They view their role to be advocates for clients, to engage professionally with them and meet their needs as they best see fit. However, Ellis also notes the prevalence of other characteristics within street-level professionals, such as those akin to Lipsky’s archetype, those which resonate with and seek to advance new public management reforms, and those who are paternalistic and judgemental in their interactions with service users (see also section 2.4.4. below).
The role of professional identity is a significant factor here. Winter (2002) found that a range of factors, including workers’ perceptions of the policy programme and its perceived efficacy, had an impact on the implementation process. Where workers felt the policies they were required to implement would not work, they tended to ‘shirk’ their work or ‘sabotage’ the implementation process altogether (Brehm and Gates, 1999). This research was supported by further work undertaken by May and Winter (2009), who found that a worker’s understanding of how a programme fitted with their understanding of a particular policy domain or sector, and their professional role within it, tended to affect policy implementation: the closer the alignment, the greater the degree of ‘successful’ implementation.

Extensive quantitative work by Tummers (2011) and colleagues (Tummers, Stein and Bekkers, 2012) also identified the role of professionals’ perceptions of a policy (creating a benefit to their work and to their clients) as having a small but positive impact on their willingness to implement a programme. In addition, their work highlighted the role perception of programme or policy effectiveness for clients can have on the implementation process. In both sets of findings, programmes, which were deemed to negatively affect clients in particular ways, experienced implementation problems, largely through bureaucrats’ unwillingness to implement them because of these perceptions.

Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2000, 2003) developed a dichotomy between a traditional, bureaucratic, street-level ‘state-agent’, and a more responsive, client-centred street-level ‘citizen-agent’ and used these to examine the different factors which affect street-level behaviour. It is a useful dichotomy when considering the roles that street-level bureaucrats view themselves as having, as well as their perceptions of their clients and the policies they work with.
A state-agent conforms to the traditional notion of a street-level bureaucrat (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003, pp.1-24). In the face of bureaucratic demands and pressures, they exercise their discretion to selectively apply rules so as to make their own work easier. They focus on easier clients, look for quick solutions, and generally seek to avoid dangerous situations. They are motivated by self-interest. They view their clients as cases to be processed, and take short-cuts to deal with excessive workload. They ‘cream’ easier clients and avoid more challenging cases. They select certain clients for additional interventions or rewards.

A Citizen-agent, on the other hand, views themselves as individuals working for their clients on an individual basis, not simply to make their own work easier. They see the client in front of them as the main determinant of their activity, not legal rules and procedures. They go beyond the call of duty, often putting themselves in danger. They keep cases open long after they could have been closed to ensure that families’ needs are met. They challenge supervisors about case scenarios. Their measure of success is not the bureaucratic emphasis on cases processed, but whether clients were successfully aided. They exercise discretion to meet the needs of clients, and view what they do as worthy work. However, such work is mediated by moral reasoning about client behaviour which they engage in. Such judging is not required by the rules, but because they believe the judgements to be normatively right. Worthy work is done for worthy clients. Citizen-agents emphasise relationships and the role of advocacy, and are guided by pragmatism, not idealism. Their main frame of reference is the citizen clients they work with, followed by their peers. They pay little attention to anyone beyond these groups.

As the authors highlight, the two constructs are not dichotomous; they are not all or nothing scenarios, but rather can aid in the analysis of street-level activities and roles. While acknowledging that in reality neither type of agent exists in a pure form, the dichotomy services as a useful heuristic.
tool for examining variation in roles. They find that workers exhibit traits of both types of agent (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003).

Different and often competing role perceptions in street-level behaviour have been found in other studies. Hagan (1987) found similar variation amongst workers in the administration of income maintenance. Despite the separation of the income maintenance from broader social services, those administering income maintenance payments also provided important social services to clients, such as information and advice, referrals to other services, accessing services directly, helping with legal matters and generally advocating for clients. van Berkel, van der Aa and van Gestel (2010), in their application of the Jewell and Glaser framework to activation work, found three types of role: bureaucratic, where rigid application of the programme occurred; entrepreneurial, where activation was still the focus, but the application of the process was more flexible; and care-orientated, where the goal was not central to the work, with workers being more protective of clients, without achieving the goals of the programme.

2.4.2. Incentives
In the Jewell and Glaser framework, the factor incentives involves “the formal and informal system of rewards and sanctions that affect how workers take different courses of action” (Jewell and Glaser, 2006, p.341). Here, the role of both formal and informal rewards and sanctions operated by the organisation are central to explaining street-level behaviour in policy implementation. These may include personal rewards for discretionary behaviours, personal satisfaction, or more extrinsic rewards or avoidance of sanctions based on actions which workers know they are being evaluated on by supervisors.

In their analysis, there was an absence of incentives to entice workers to talk about work opportunities with clients, thus it tended not to happen. In fact, it was a disincentive as it would have resulted in an increased
workload for them. The need for workers to have difficult or uncomfortable conversations with clients in broaching the job issue also tended to prevent them from doing so. Such personal rewards for discretionary behaviour, or sanctions for so doing, were accompanied by formal sanctions at the organisational level for not completing paperwork properly and forwarding it to central authorities. The focus of the organisation was on the process of paperwork completion, rather than meaningful engagement with clients.

Incentives play a role in Lipskys’ work. Their absence, or the possession by the street-level worker of “countermeasures” to any sanctions which a superior may impose tends to result in discretionary behaviour by the worker (Lipsky, 1980, p.16-18). Where systems of performance management are in place, workers behave in ways which mimic or directly feed into that process of management and assessment, so as to avoid sanction. Pressures of the system mean that taking harder or ‘riskier’ cases is not incentivised or rewarded. Rewards, in the form of satisfaction ratings from clients and expressions of gratitude, or visible changes in their behaviour, can be attained by workers, whether the change is associated with the direct work of the street-level worker or not (1980, p.59).

Rewards and validation can be also received from peer groups and reference groups, although, as part of the latter, supervisors are portrayed as having reciprocal but conflictual relationships with workers. However, they can provide informal rewards and sanctions such as making work more or less interesting for workers (1980). In the main, Lipsky argues, sanctions do not occur in this type of work due to the tying of posts to civil service employment codes and the difficulty in dismissing people. Hence, he believes, poor performance prevails (Lipsky, 1980). In his call for a renewal of public service provision, he suggests that the financial rewards and career opportunities for street-level workers needs to be similar to that received by comparable workers in the private sector (1980).
Recent work on the concept of motivation in street-level work has reinforced the potential for different behaviours of street-level workers to occur. Nielsen (2006) takes a position contrary to Lipsky and assumes that workers engage in practices which are more than simply about managing work frustrations but actually relate to a series of different motivations in the job:

- economic motivations involve pay, promotion and working hours;
- social motivations involve interaction with clients, colleagues and superiors; and
- self-fulfilling motivations arise out of variation in the job, challenges of the job, identifying with the job, and valuing the job, personally and for society.

Nielsen (2006) argues that the motivation of workers can be understood through the effects of both positive and negative pressures on a number of factors which structure their behaviour. In her structuring of “social man” at the street-level, she views interaction with supervisors as potentially affecting their tendency and motivation to work. She argues that workers will engage in programme implementation due to the self-fulfilling nature of the work involved. Drawing on theories of human relations in constructing “self-fulfilling man”, she posits that workers will engage positively with a programme if it challenges them in particular ways. Similarly, Taylor (2014) notes that workers who can see the positive impact their work has on clients and others around them are rewarded and have a greater sense of motivation.

Work on the role of “frontline supervisors” in public bureaucracies has highlighted the potential for increased motivation of street-level workers (Brewer, 2005). In their studies on police officers, Haarr (2000) and Engel (2002, cited in Wang, 2006) discovered that positive relationships with supervisors increased police officers’ motivations to work and their overall job satisfaction. Central to this was the role of supervisors in providing
support in implementing community policing programmes, and more generally, in offering problem-solving strategies (Wang, 2006).

In his study of supervisors across federal agencies in the United States, Brewer (2005) found that frontline supervisors can play an important role in a number of areas, including the positive motivation of individual workers to undertake their work. Brehm and Gates (1997), in examining street-level leadership in their study, found that the perspective of supervisor as a public service principal adopting solely a formal oversight role in the supervisory process was insufficient to capture the realities of social work supervision. Instead, they found that supervisors played a role as mission advocates and trust builders (see also Brehm and Gates, 2004).

With the advance of new public management and the introduction of quantitative performance measures and contracting out, the incentives for street-level workers to engage with clients in less than meaningful ways are more pronounced. Brodkin (2008) notes that the introduction of targets for case processing for performance measurement purposes can lead to workers taking short cuts to meet the targets. This is evident in Smith and Donavan’s (2003) work where workers were encouraged to move children to placements rather than work with families for the betterment of children’s lives. Dias and Maynard-Moody (2007) noted that the costs associated with working with unemployed clients in individualised ways to overcome barriers to gaining work were too costly for the workers and their organisations, and thus the clients were merely processed. In Martin, Phelps and Katbamna’s (2004) work, the system in which home care policy was implemented incentivised particular cost-limiting behaviours and thus prevented workers from fulfilling what they saw as their professional duties.

The role of other professionals validating street-level workers’ activities has received some attention in the literature. Halliday et al. (2009), in their study of social workers’ roles within the justice system in Scotland, found
social workers adjusted their work to try and engender greater appreciation by other professionals in the system, particularly legal professionals. Despite their attempts, however, the workers felt devalued and disregarded due to their perceptions of inferiority when dealing with these professionals.

2.4.3. Knowledge and expertise
As a factor, the Jewell and Glaser framework identifies *knowledge and expertise* as pertaining to different elements of programme implementation. It involves workers’ understandings of programme rules and aims, and the skills workers have to facilitate the engagement of clients in the programme itself. Hence, this involves their educational backgrounds, specific training received for the programme’s implementation, and broader knowledge of agency and community resources (Jewell and Glaser, 2006, p.341). An important distinction here is between knowledge of resources and their use in engaging with clients. What is being inquired into here is the workers’ own knowledge of programme rule requirements, and resources they can access themselves for their own work, not resources for the use of clients (which comes under the factor of authority). Jewell and Glaser found that workers tended to have limited education and on-the-job training which, when combined with excessive workload, served to undermine implementation. While some workers did not understand the rules governing the application of particular welfare entitlements, no workers had the requisite “social work” skills necessary to engage clients in a meaningful or individualised way about seeking employment.

Lipsky’s conceptualisation of knowledge tends to relate to the engagement of clients directly. In their perceived advocacy role, street-level bureaucrats are expected to use their knowledge and expertise to secure the best treatment for their clients, but in reality are prevented from doing so due to their need to process clients and address high workload (1980, p.73). The paucity of resources at the agency level also affects workers’
ability to meet client needs and address policy goals (1980, p.115). The absence of time affects their ability to generate information and develop a picture of clients and meet their needs on an individualised basis (1980, p.29). While many street-level bureaucrats are deemed to have particular expertise to meet the needs of clients, its use is curtailed by the pressures of work. This results in workers validating their own views about why their clients fail to make progress (1980, p.115). In the work environment of the street-level bureaucrat, the lack of resources can affect the implementation process. Not being sufficiently trained and not having physical and psychological support as workers, particularly where street-level work is emotionally demanding or dangerous (1980, p.31), are viewed as impediments to effective implementation.

Again, other scholars have addressed the issue of resources (such as knowledge and expertise) in street-level implementation. Resources can often mean access to expertise, either through street-level worker’s own knowledge, as is the case with professionals as street-level bureaucrats (Evans; 2011, 2013; Jewell, 2007; Sandstrom, 2011). However, other individuals and objects can also form the basis of these resources. Hill (2003) identified a number of resources which contribute to the implementation environment, such as academics, researchers, entrepreneurs, trade journals, and professional associations. These external resources all play a role in creating an opportunity for street-level workers to generate a better understanding of the policies they are implementing and particular approaches or “best practices” to adopt to achieve goals, and thus support implementation.

Foldy and Buckley (2010) outlined the role process can play as a resource. Where workers had a clear process in place, both implementation and policy learning were more successful. Good relationships with superiors, opportunities for reflection and effective team leadership all played a similarly positive role. Peer supervision and group interaction and reflection were viewed to contribute to the generation of learning and
knowledge in street-level workers when new programmes required new routines. Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003) also note that the peers play a powerful role in their street-level, citizen-agent narrative. Fellow workers are resources tapped into in overcoming challenging cases, and in challenging management. However, managers and supervisors can also be resources in progressing cases and through shared perspectives on working with clients (see Evans, 2011, 2013), although there are limits to this in the citizen-agent perspective (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003).

Technology and particular forms of resources are also important to consider. Brodkin (1997), in her study of the implementation of activation policies in the United States, indicated that street-level workers’ ability to implement programmes through their case work was effectively a function of capacity. This capacity was based on the range of resources, including knowledge and expertise, access to training, agency services, and opportunities for clients, in this case, for them to secure employment. Based on the extent of the resources available, she stated that street-level workers do not simply do what they want, they do what they can. She highlighted that welfare workers in her study often did not have the basics to undertake their work, such as computers, pencils and paper. Ellis (2007) argued that, while workers were required to implement new assessment processes in social care, the scarcity of resources, especially time, tended to result in them limiting their availability to clients to undertake the assessments in social work environments.

2.4.4. Authority
For Jewell and Glaser, authority is defined as “the ability of workers to have an impact on others, in this case clients, by virtue of their position” (Jewell and Glaser, 2006, p.341). In other words, this is the power that workers can exercise over service users, which is sourced formally from their job descriptions, which may require them to act in certain ways or do particular things. It is also informally in the discretion they can exercise in deciding when and how to use their power. Such power can manifest itself
in the workers’ ability and willingness (or not) to sanction clients or access agency resources for clients.

In their analysis of welfare to work policies, the authors examined how resources over which the workers have control serve to promote the policy goal of client employment. They found that, although the workers had control over financial aspects of the policy – such as providing additional child care payments for working, or expediting claim processes quickly – they were detached from other aspects of the implementation process, such as providing the employment services directly. Although they could sanction service users for not complying with the procedures, such action was the final step in a process, the rest of which they had nothing to do with. This fragmentation of the implementation process, and of the multiple roles of workers in one organisation, was underpinned by a case where workers in a welfare to work programme had slightly more authority, in this case to take decisions regarding a service-user’s ability to work. In both cases, however, the ability of workers to sanction service users was found to prevent the establishment of trusting relationships necessary to achieve the goal of employment.

The discretion street-level workers have over their clients and the autonomy they possess from their line managers and supervisors provides much of the basis for Lipsky’s thesis. This discretion allows workers to act in ways which effectively become policy as received by clients (Brodkin, 2011). Discretion is exercised through professional expertise, through the need to respond to client needs which may or may not fall outside the parameters of the policy or programme being implemented, and through the complex nature of the problems they face in meeting the needs of clients (Lipsky, 1980, p.13-16). Managers and supervisors are deemed to be unable to monitor all aspects of street-level work to assess whether roles and procedures are being implemented systematically. Workers themselves can further expand this autonomy through measures such as withholding some or all information from supervisors about cases, and not
or only partly implementing particular rules and regulations (Lipsky, 1980, p.16-23).

Lipsky’s analysis of discretion has been argued as a call for greater top-down control of street-level bureaucrats (Evans, 2011). Evans (2006; 2011; 2013) has written extensively about the nature of discretion in services for children and families. He argues that Lipsky essentially characterises discretion as a problem which needs to be overcome. More significant for Evans is Lipsky’s characterisation of managers/supervisors and street-level bureaucrats as being in continual conflict, and that managers are slavish overseers of work to achieve the organisation’s mandate, as a homogenous group of policy lieutenants.

In his analysis of social work teams in an English local authority, Evans (2011) found that managers and frontline workers were often at one about many aspects of street-level work. They shared the same reservation about aspects of the policy which they were charged with implementing. Specifically, they viewed the organisation as devaluing the place of broader social work approaches to mental health patients and older people through narrowing the focus to care management alone. In addition, managers and workers more often than not worked together to address issues in particular cases, a situation Evans describes as a sense of commitment to the needs of service users and a sense of freedom in their work role. The sense of professionalism amongst workers was important, but arguably more significant was that such a sense was shared by managers alike: in many cases they were social workers who tended to identify as professional social workers rather than (simply) as managers.

Murray’s (2006) work, in particular, highlighted this problem in Lipsky’s thesis about the supposed conflict between managers and street-level workers. In the implementation of home supervision policy, Murray found that managers and street-level workers shared “assumptive worlds” (Young, 1977, cited in Murray, 2006) about differences perceived between
various categories of children in the care system. The role of supervision is of note in the work of Brewer (2005), who observed that the process of supervision had a direct link to workers’ perception of performance and shared understandings of organisational goals.

Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003) refer to the understanding afforded by caseworkers to supervisors who may have come up through the ranks and thus understand the pragmatism which is often required in street-level work. They cite examples of where workers and supervisors cooperate to bend the rules to meet the needs of particularly vulnerable clients. However, such cooperation has its limits: where further bending of the rules are required, the worker acts alone. Their findings suggest that the needs of clients are more important in determining behaviour than the actions of supervisors, and thus they use their discretion as they see fit.

May and Winter (2009) found that the influence of managerial actions on street-level work towards the policy goal was limited. Where case workers were knowledgeable about the rules of their service and their professional preparation for their work was high, influence was even more limited. In addition, supervision also had limited impact on the work of case workers. The reason given for this is that supervision emphasised “the calling attention to the specifics of the rules or reminding caseworkers of the importance of particular provisions” (May and Winter, 2009, p.468) rather than a mechanism in which to transmit more than a simple understanding of the rules.

However, in the context of authority, professionalism as a determinant of street-level behaviour is not undisputed in the literature. Scott (1997), in his experimental study of street-level decision making, found that the immediacy of the task facing workers tended to have a greater influence than professional norms of socialisation. Indeed, when workers were faced with greater levels of organisational control, such as increased documentation requirements for case processing and decision justification,
many workers embraced these mechanisms as ways of enhancing accountability. Scott (1997, p.52), citing Kaufman (1977), notes that “one person’s ‘red tape’ may be another’s treasured procedural safeguard”.

Ellis’ (2007; 2011) retrospective analysis of discretion in four English social care services over 20 years found a number of different types of discretion. In the street-level paradigm, her analysis revealed typical Lipskian behaviour. Managing workload through mechanisms such as referring to other services, rationing and accepting stereotyped referrals or the professional judgement of others was prevalent. While the advance of information technology and accountability mechanisms such as new rules and procedures were part of the working environment and increased workload, they created space for new forms of discretion to emerge.

In the practitioner paradigm, workers and managers were found to converge on the importance of managerial reforms in the public sector. The proliferation of assessment tools served to supplant the more informal rationing techniques of the past. The emphasis on information technology negated the requirement of managers and supervisors to worry about exercising oversight of workers. These public management techniques were viewed as penetrating professional identity and values. Workers welcomed these measures as they sought to enhance accountability and provide greater clarification of what was required from practice. In short, they reduced uncertainty and made explicit what was required for each case. Ellis asserts that the workers appeared willing to “embrace a new administrative tradition in social work” (Ellis, 2011, p.233).

In the bureau-professional paradigm, the value of professional judgement was apparent. Workers spoke of engaging professionally with service users and of assembling appropriate care packages to meet needs. This discretionary behaviour was promoted through workers’ own sense of professional identity and a relationship with supervisors and managers
which enabled them to retain some scope of work tasks. In the main, they spoke of being advocates for clients, of working for them.

In the paternalistic paradigm, the professional was willing to use their discretion to engage in long-term relationships with service users. Needs were often described as emotional, with workers knowing what was best for their clients through their control of the assessment process. However, there was also evidence of value judgement and subsequent rationing of services. Those users described as electively dependent tended to be denied or rationed services, while those who sought to become more independent were supported. The rise of user empowerment tended to produce something of a backlash amongst workers who were characterised as wanting to hold on to their professional authority.

Ellis’ work is important for two reasons: it shows the continuing importance of the street-level concept in the analysis of policy implementation. It also reflects the complex nature of street-level discretion. Elements of each paradigm were apparent in all four studies. The work highlights that street-level behaviour is a constant “dynamic interaction between countervailing forces” (Ellis, 2011, p.241).

However, despite the evidence in this section from Scott (1997), and some of Ellis’ (2011) paradigms, much of the analysis in the extant literature points to a gap in Lipsky’s portrayal of worker-manager/supervisor relationships, especially where care professionals as opposed to frontline administrators are involved. The significance of bureau-professionalism in analysing and understanding the exercise of authority and discretion is clear in the work of Evans (2011), in particular, as well as others, and is an important consideration in examining the utility of Jewell and Glaser’s framework. This is particularly so, given the general absence of the place of supervision and worker-manager/supervisor relationships in the factor authority in their framework.
2.4.5. Workload
For Jewell and Glaser, *workload* involves the number of cases which are assigned to each worker and the tasks and decisions involved in administering each case. In this latter regard, such tasks and decisions can arise from policy or programmatic requirements, as well as from the particulars of each individual case (Jewell and Glaser, 2006, p.341).

In the implementation of activation policy in California, the authors found that the workload of case workers was large and varied. In the main, they were responsible for a number of welfare-related schemes which were aspects of the broader activation approach. Many of these programmes had different eligibility requirements and assessment processes. Where service users were eligible for multiple schemes, the impact of such eligibility added to the workload of each case worker: more information needed to be collected, processed and the revised set of benefits accruing to the service user calculated. Revisions to the forms made familiarisation of the process for workers difficult. High caseloads meant that workers only focused on the core aspects of their work which related to assessment and form completion (and even then with difficulty), with little time to undertake non-core tasks such as engaging with service users about wider aspects of gaining employment (Jewell and Glaser, 2006, p.344, 352).

In Lipsky’s work, high workloads are a fundamental characteristic of street-level bureaucracies. They prevent workers from going the extra mile with service users (in some cases, but not always in those cases which are deemed deserving) and more generally they affect the time available to workers for decision-making about cases. They contribute to worker stress. As a result, workers develop coping strategies which help them manage their excessive caseloads. They engage in client processing, which becomes the goal of street-level work rather than the means. The teacher focuses on maintaining order in class rather than educating students, for example. They develop their own (reduced) conceptions of public service which allows them, in their own view, to do more for clients relative to
what they originally conceptualised the job to be. They reinforce this by declaring to the client that their actions are going beyond what is required of them, when in fact such action is closer to what their job actually is.

At the extreme, workers may resign their posts, although Lipsky argues that the incentive structure of the public service prevents this from occurring. However, they may psychologically resign, “rejecting personal responsibility for agency performance (Lipsky, 1980, p.143). They may deny that they have discretion, using rule and procedure with a client to delimit their actions. They may also deflect their own inabilities and deficiencies onto a client that is characterised as part of their psychological and personal development. Finally, they may split their cases into active and inactive, with the latter representing cases that require more tasks than the worker can do in their normal day utilising their client process techniques.

Workers also engage in a number of general actions which seek to manage or “husband” resources in particular ways or effectively reduce their workload (Lipsky, 1980, pp.105-116, 125-133). They rubber stamp: they adopt the judgements of others rather than undertake their own assessment. They respond to the stereotype of a client rather than addressing the needs of individual clients. When agencies become completely swamped with cases, workers refer on. While Lipsky acknowledges that such a mechanism can serve a purpose, it is often used to manage heavy workloads while still giving the impression that some service has been rendered to the client.

Overall, Lipsky’s view on workloads is fatalistic. Although he states that there may be public service agencies who, free from financial scrutiny “can add qualitative improvement or reduce caseload pressures” (1980, p.39), in the main, bureaucracies tend to use any decline in caseload to reduce staff numbers and ‘consolidate’ services. Even if working conditions improved slightly, any benefit is mediated by the worker’s sense of psychological
harassment due to the sheer volume of work. The perception of workload as well as the actual volume contributes to the sense of overburden in Lipsky’s street-level worker.

In their analysis of street-level work, Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2000; 2003) identify that workload is a factor in both the state-agent and citizen-agent narratives. In the state-agent narrative, decisions are taken which serve the interest of the worker, broadly as outlined in Lipsky above. In the citizen-agent narrative, workload is dependent on workers’ views of their clients. The stories recounted by the authors highlight that workers are, on many occasions, willing to do much more than is required by rules and regulations to meet specific client needs. However, their work is limited by a pragmatism about what is possible and what is realistic, and more importantly, by the moral judgement which they make about their clients. If clients are deemed to be undeserving, citizen-agents will fall back on state-agent characteristics to ration services and rationalise their judgement (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2000, p.347).

Much of the published literature on street-level behaviour supports Lipsky’s depiction of excessive workloads, although not always all of their effects. Jewell (2007) identified a variety of coping mechanisms in his study of activation in three countries, including rationing, reduced roles of workers, and sanctioning. Similarly in Californian welfare to work programmes, the excessive workloads of activation workers tended to limit the interaction with clients to transactions based on eligibility criteria and payment. Only in exceptional circumstances did workers move beyond this type of exchange, largely out of concern for their clients and a sense of professional ethics. However, all workers were impeded by a lack of opportunities for clients. While sanctions for non-cooperating clients were present from the start, the requisite supports such as education and training to foster client employment were slow to follow (Meyers, Glaser and MacDonald, 1998; see also Brodkin, 1997). Such impediments led
Brodkin to state that caseworkers “do not do just what they want or just what they are told to want. They do what they can” (Brodkin, 1997, p.24).

In child and family work, Smith and Donovan (2003) found that excessive workloads determined the level and type of interaction with parents. Many caseworkers reported that they did not maintain contact with parents in cases where they worked with children because the parents were perceived to not be interested. When they did engage with parents, they did so to a limited degree. Trying to encourage parents was viewed as a waste of time. Other workers again denied or absolved themselves of responsibility by stating that the only person who could change the parents were the parents themselves. It is clear that while workload was a factor, so too were personal preferences and values.

In his analysis of agri-environmental officers and immigration officials, Winter (2002) found that in using coping mechanisms, street-level workers were more influenced by their own attitudes towards, and perceptions of, their workload. The use of coping mechanisms had more to do with the social-psychological factors than with access to extra resources to meet demand. Perceptions of the adequacy of staffing and of professional support were found to be the primary determinants of workers’ use of various mechanisms. Another determinant was the workers’ attitude to their clients. In his study, aversion to the client group worked with was linked to an increase in the use of coping mechanisms. Yet, even where workers were tolerant of client groups, some use of coping was still detected.

Tummers et al. (2015) undertook the first systematic review of literature documenting coping strategies used by street-level bureaucrats in the

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6 The authors acknowledge that coping mechanisms may be used by workers when not engaging with clients. However, they have excluded these from their review as such strategies are not aligned with the “core empirical, normative and applied concerns of public administration” such as how worker stress translates into actions taken towards clients, which impacts on the quality of service delivery and the “legitimacy of public agencies and the state” (Tummers et al., 2015, p.4).
face of workload pressure during client-worker interaction. They identified three sets or ‘families’ and nine different ways present in the literature in which frontline workers cope with excessive workload.

The most frequently cited set of strategies was that which they labelled *moving towards clients*. This involved workers acting pragmatically, adjusting to clients’ needs with the aim of helping them and securing long term success. There is a strong current of public service ethic in this family, with workers wanting to perform meaningful actions even if it costs them in terms of personal resources and stress. The particular ways in which workers cope in this family are (Tummers et al., 2015, pp.10-12):

- rule bending – adjusting the rules to meet a client’s demands;
- rule breaking – neglecting or deliberately obstructing the rules to meet a client’s demands;
- instrumental action – executing long-lasting solutions to overcome stressful situations. This may include actions in particularly stressful situations which persevere for a long period of time;
- prioritising among clients – giving certain clients more time, resources or energy. The authors prefer the term prioritising over Lipksy’s ‘creaming’ as it describes more accurately what is going on in frontline practice; and
- use of personal resources – using one’s own time, money or energy to benefit the client.

The second family of strategies is termed *moving away from clients*. This family captures mechanisms where workers avoid meaningful interaction with clients. The particular ways in which workers cope in this family are (Tummers et al., 2015, p.12):

- routinising – dealing with clients in a standardised way. In trying to provide a large number of clients with the same standard of service, the quality of the service is compromised; and
• rationing – making access to frontline services under their control more difficult for clients.

The final family of strategies is termed moving against clients. This family captures mechanisms where workers confront clients. It is the smallest family identified in the literature. The particular ways in which workers cope in this family are (Tummers et al., 2015, pp.12-13):

• rigid rule following – sticking to the rules as a way of controlling clients, particularly those who are demanding and manipulative. The authors prefer this term to Lipsky’s sanctioning; and
• aggression – engaging in aggressive behaviour in response to aggression from a client, or simply because of the stress of the work situation as a way to relieve frustrations.

In identifying these three families, the authors make two observations. Firstly, it is apparent in the literature that workers in the majority of cases move towards clients. They take a citizen-agent orientation (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003) to do whatever they can for the client. Secondly, and relatedly, workers’ tendency to cope is dependent on situational characteristics. Role conflicts brought about by a perceived incompatibility between policy orientation and client demands may lead to rule bending or rule breaking. Where workers feel that they can meet the needs of clients they may use their own personal resources or take longer term actions to ease the situation at a more general level, such as instrumental action.

2.4.6. Client contact
Finally, the factor client contact refers to the frequency, amount of time and quality of contact or interaction between the worker and the client. In Jewell and Glaser’s framework, where clients receive benefits for a prolonged period of time, the frequency and regularity of client-worker interaction becomes an important focal point in understanding street-level behaviour (Jewell and Glaser, 2006, p.341). Of note here in their definition
of the factor is the role of place in the analysis of interaction: “it is the overall environment in which the workers and clients interact and the atmosphere created within the office by the way the program (sic) is administered” (Jewell and Glaser, 2006, p.341). Thus, the factor requires attention not just to quantitative aspects such as the number of interactions and their length, but also where they occur and how the exchange between the client and the worker is framed.

In their analysis, Jewell and Glaser found that workers engaged with a large number of clients in the office (on a one-to-one basis) over a short period of time. Meetings lasted about five minutes, were infrequent, rigidly structured and focused on eligibility. They found that there was little opportunity to focus on anything else, especially conversations about employment. The “high information nature” (Jewell and Glaser, 2006, p.345) of these interactions limited the ability of workers to focus on client self-sufficiency. In other cases, the workers’ focus on completing paperwork was not only reinforced by the high caseloads but also the incentive structure in the organisation: workers were evaluated on whether their paperwork was up-to-date or not.

Lipsky (1980) characterises clients of street-level bureaucracies as non-voluntary in one of two ways. They are actually non-voluntary (as in the case of prisoners), or are effectively so due to the agency being the only service provider and/or the clients being unable to afford private provision. In this regard, he identifies the power aspect of the client-worker relationship. When a person enters a relationship involuntarily because the other person has something they want, “the nature of the interaction changes” (Lipsky, 1980, p.56).

Workers can routinely control clients in a number of ways and impose costs on them. Workers can neglect them, they can inconvenience them. If clients refuse to interact, workers do not suffer any sanction for it. The
fault is almost always attributable to the client (they are disorganised, they dropped out), or at times to society.

More specifically, clients are controlled in a number of ways through a process of social construction (Lipsky, 1980, pp.59-70):

- workers distribute benefits and sanctions, more so where there is a discretionary aspect to such distribution;
- workers structure the context of interaction. This is not so much about location as it usually takes place in the worker’s office, but other aspects of the interaction such as when they will take place, their duration, how often, what they will be about and what resources will be brought to bear on the process. Context is organised in such a way so as to facilitate workers’ processing of clients;
- workers teach the client role to service users. This is done through encouraging deference of client to worker, emphasising the penalties for not displaying deference, controlling expectations about what the service can and cannot do for the client and on a selective basis providing a small amount of information to clients about how to get more out of the system;
- workers distribute psychological benefits and sanctions, again particularly where interactions are prolonged. Given their position, street-level bureaucrats’ interactions with clients can have a profound impact on clients. Workers’ perceptions, images and expectations of clients (e.g. good students, bad students) can send powerful messages to clients.

Clients in Lipsky’s thesis are not completely powerless (Lipsky, 1980, p.58-59). They can impose costs on workers through having more time at their disposal than workers. The latter are pressed for time, while clients are not (or at least less so). Therefore, through requiring a service from the worker, clients can impose time costs on workers. Secondly, workers are bound by
professional ethics, norms and bureaucratic standards which limit what they can do to ensure client compliance. Thirdly, client satisfaction and performance are important to workers, both from a personal value point of view (they value successful intervention, gratitude and changes in behaviour) but also for the purpose of doing the job. Where interaction is prolonged, clients may use a number of strategies to influence future interaction, such as empathising with worker problems, acquiescence, passivity, and acceptance of their own responsibility for their situation.

Many authors have challenged the passivity of the client implied in Lipsky’s work. Murray (2006) noted that families subjected to home supervision orders\(^7\) in Scotland played a pivotal role in both the process and policy outcome. Workers tended to categorise families based on the extent of their cooperation, with two measures of cooperation being (a) whether families turned up for appointments or allowed home visits, and (b) the extent to which families accepted or engaged with the intervention. Murray found that a significant minority of families (40%) who were deemed to be uncooperative had their supervision order terminated at the annual review. Through non-compliance, the families were deemed to have shaped policy on the ground.

Smith and Donovan’s work (2003) on child welfare workers found that, while the majority of workers were bound by an organisational context akin to what Lipsky described, some empowered parents when faced with time and organisational pressures. They drew on the personal aspects of the client, emphasised strengths in their case and paid particular attention to how they structured their practice so as not to come across as condescending or omnipotent (Smith and Donovan, 2003, p.557-558).

Similarly, Scott (1997) found that particular characteristics of clients influenced what workers did. The background histories and current

\(^7\) Murray (2006) states that home supervision orders were not new to Scotland, but were reaffirmed in the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. Their focus is on children in state care due to having being abused, neglected or having offended; and those who are regularly absent from school, but who remain at home.
circumstances of clients in his experiment significantly influenced what workers did for and with them, and the amount of benefits they received; high-compassion clients tended to receive more than low-compassion clients. This echoes Maynard-Moody and Musheno’s (2003) contention that frontline workers do not see groups of people, such as the disabled or the unemployed but instead see individuals who have both flaws and strengths and who thus require a tailored response.

Nielsen (2006) argues that Lipsky’s conceptualisation of worker-client interaction is too narrow, and does not permit the possibility that worker and client interests may converge. She believes that the analyst needs to appreciate that the client’s demands may not always be infinite and that the interests of worker and client can be shared. As such, researchers need to pay particular attention to how goals are constructed in worker-client interaction, and how power is distributed. Such thinking is further expounded in the work of Hill and Hupe (2007), who suggest that in considering the implementation of policies which require persuasion between actors more than the exercise of bureaucratic authority, the researcher should utilise the concept of coproduction to understand what is going on (see also Hill and Hupe, 2009). As deLeon and deLeon (2002) argue:

[s]treet-level bureaucrats might indeed be protected from their clients by civil service rules [....] but citizens nevertheless have considerable influence over their actions, particularly when citizens and bureaucrats are engaged in co-production – that is the joint production of public services by the citizen and administration – of policy outcomes (deLeon and deLeon, 2002, p.479).

Co-production seeks to move beyond the ‘old’ forms of customer engagement and concerns with efficiency towards a scenario where service managers “have the role of nurturing innovation as they become ‘explorers’ commissioned by society to search for public value” and where “the public is seen as having the role of co-producers of service and innovation” (Langergaard and Scheuer 2009, p.7; see also Hartley, 2005). It
involves a shift in the perceptions of clients, from being passive recipients of services and professional expertise to one where they are a “crucial part of the production process” (Hood, 2000, p.122). Bovaird (2007, p.847) describes co-production as the “provision of services through regular long-term relationships between professionalised service providers and service users or other members of the community, where all parties make substantial resource contributions”.

This view echoes that asserted by Whitaker (1980) in a seminal paper on co-production. He notes that American public administration (and it may be said public administration and management more generally) has been concerned with citizen participation at higher levels of the policy process, in lobbying, in community and neighbourhood decision making, even through voting. However, little attention has been paid to what happens at the service level. He argues that where public services attempt to change the person directly rather than the environment, and where active participation of the citizen is central to provision itself, co-production is inevitable:

> Whether it is learning new ideas or new skills, acquiring healthier habits, or changing one’s outlook on family or society, only the individual served can accomplish the change. He or she is a vital “coproducer” of any personal transformation that occurs. The agent can supply encouragements, suggest options, illustrate techniques, and provide guidance and advice, but the agent alone cannot bring about the change. Rather than an agent presenting a “finished product” to the citizen, agent and citizen together produced the desired transformation (Whitaker, 1980, p.240).

Whitaker (1980) identifies a number of ways in which service users can be co-producers:

- through requests for assistance, service users can continually shape what a public service does. Drawing on some of Lipsky’s thinking, public agencies need citizens to declare a need to justify their existence. Where needs exist and are declared, agencies will want to respond to such needs;
citizens can take part in the provision of assistance at a general level. For example, parents are powerful shapers of education delivered in their children’s classrooms; residents contribute to greater public safety in their locality through shared concerns and mores; and

through direct engagement and mutual adjustment, individual citizens and public service workers co-produced services. A common understanding of the citizen’s problem is established and resolutions jointly developed and implemented. Responsibility is shared. While Whitaker acknowledges that this form of co-production does not involve an interaction of equals, the public agent is willing to share authority (professional, legal) with the citizen and the citizen is willing (at the very least) to listen and to talk.

This characterisation of co-production has been supported by others, notably Osborne and Strokosch (2013). In describing a continuum of co-production, they identify three forms: consumer co-production (service delivery dominated); participative co-production (strategic planning and design dominated); and enhanced co-production (combing both service delivery and strategic planning functions). They make the point that consumer co-production “focuses upon the engagement of the consumer at the operational stage of the service production process in order to balance their expectations and experience of the service. The aim is user empowerment” (Osborne and Strokosch, 2013, p.37, emphasis in the original).

Some work has been undertaken on the role of co-production in the implementation of public policies. van Berkel (2011) noted in his analysis of activation policies in the Netherlands that the extent to which services are co-produced was dependent on the will of the worker and the resources the client brings to the exchange. Workers were generally receptive to the individual needs of clients, incorporating particular
characteristics and situations into the client’s activation plan. They brought their professional skills and values to the process. Clients themselves, in this exchange, brought a range of resources to the process as well, such as information and a willingness to engage and follow through on commitments (see also van Berkel, van der Aa and van Gestel, 2010). More generally, clients can bring an ability to negotiate, engage in dialogue and consult with workers on a regular basis through the exchange (Needham, 2009). Fenwick (2012) found that community policing in Scotland was effectively co-produced through the chance encounters between police officers and citizens of the locality, as well as through negotiations about police service delivery at the frontline with citizens.

In a family support context, Coen and Kearns (2013) found that the nature of the interaction between worker and client tended to govern the extent of co-production. Some clients were more active than others, some workers more supportive than others. Cox (2007) found that in the context of family group conferencing, the extent of partnership was determined by the willingness of families to engage meaningfully with the process, as well as the statutory responsibilities of agencies, especially those responsible for child protection. In such situations, there were limits to partnership and the extent to which families were their own experts.

2.4.7. Section summary
In this section, Lipsky’s work stands out for obvious reasons. It set the benchmark with which other street-level analyses were – and are - compared and contrasted. Many have followed in the street-level vein, producing findings which have both confirmed and challenged his perspective. These findings have enriched what is known about street-level behaviour, and provided new points of interest and avenues for exploration which can be explored in subsequent research. Although Jewell and Glaser (2006) have added to this knowledge through their empirical work, they have also sought to extend the form of analysis through the development of a framework for others to test. As they
suggest, there may be variation regarding which factors are more important than others, dependent on the situation and the policy being implemented.

As cited above, the policy goal which was central to the development of the Jewell and Glaser framework was client employment. This study attempts to examine the framework’s potential when a policy is not as clearly defined. Thus, I now turn to explore the area of parenting support, particularly in the context of family support, an important element of the framework’s testing.

2.5. Family and parenting support

2.5.1. Family, parenting and the state
Families have been the focus of governments’ attention in some form or another for over a century now (and longer in some countries), although the umbrella phrase ‘family policy’ has been used only relatively recently (Kammerman, 2010; Daly and Clavero, 2002). Kammerman (2010) identifies family policy as having two central characteristics: one is a concern with all children and families, with potential for a particular focus on poor families and families with problems; and the second being “an acknowledgment that doing better by children requires help for parents and the family unit as well” (2010, p.430). This latter characteristic resonates with broader social policy developments in numerous countries over the past decade or so, and in particular with the emergence of parenting as a new focus of debate, regulation and service provision. While previously family policy was (and in many ways still is) largely about affecting form or structure, increasingly it is also about affecting family processes, practices (Gillies, 2012) and functioning (Daly and Clavero, 2002). While governments have always impacted on the social context in which families operate and parents parent (Garbarino, Vorrasi and Kostelny, 2002; Henricson, 2003), parenting as a specific or ‘discrete’ policy
issue would appear now to be very much the subject of discussion and political action (Broadhurst, 2009).

Parenting as a policy issue has emerged in different countries for different reasons, and at different times. However, Coley et al., (2009) identify a number of common factors, such as changes to family units, the emergence of the notion that children represent human capital (as tomorrow’s citizens and economic producers), and child poverty and exclusion, which, it is argued can be counteracted through improved parenting practices proven to work. Shifts in parent-child interaction, shifts towards prevention and early intervention, an increasing awareness of children’s rights, and of evidence supporting particular forms of intervention, are also key factors in its emergence (Clavero, 2001; Shulruf et al., 2009; Utting and Pugh, 2004).

It is clear, even from this brief list, that a strong focus on parenting as a public issue in recent times results from a very specific interest in children: achieving better outcomes (O’Connor and Scott, 2007), improving well-being (Daly and Clavero, 2002; Heath, 2004), and realising rights (Pecnik, 2007). Epitomised most clearly in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), children’s rights have dominated debates about parental responsibilities, parental rights and the role of governments in (not) realising those rights (Considine and Dukelow, 2009; Kilkelly, 2007; Richardson, 2005).

In addition to having obvious benefits for children, good parenting as a process can have benefits for parents themselves.8 The Council of Europe’s promotion of positive parenting emphasises the importance of the process of ‘good parenting’ as something which benefits both child and parent and “indeed can only be defined as positive when it operates to the mutual

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8 The argument of parenting as a two-way process is notable here: some authors argue that parent-child relationship is a more accurate phrase than parenting as the former “connotes a more mutual, dynamic, interactive process that describes the processes of mechanisms of influence” (O’Connor and Scott, 2007, P.2).
benefit of both” (Daly, 2007, p.10). Halpern (1990) has identified that an underlying rationale for parenting support is the recognition of the importance of the phase of life for parents themselves, particularly around adjusting to it and other tasks, as setting a solid foundation for themselves and their children, and as being a critical part of identity construction.

The emergence of parents as a target for government intervention is not without its critics, particularly in the context of developments in the UK. Gillies (2005) and Broadhurst (2009) both identify the potential for such policies and initiatives to be value-laden, seeking to pathologise poverty, deprivation and disadvantage as individual, inter-generational characteristics devoid of wider structural context, thus amounting to a form of social control or that it can be interpreted as desiring a particular form of middle-class parenting (Cruddas, 2010; Klett-Davies, 2010; Tilsen, 2007). They argue that parenting cannot be reduced to a set of skills to be taught, devoid of any understanding of the relationships to which they are to be applied (Broadhurst, 2009), thus the importance of an ecology of parenting resonates here. Churchill and Clarke (2010) recognise the benefits of parenting programmes but also reinforce the importance of not losing sight of bigger social issues which can impact on all parents and their parenting practices.

Lewis (2011), in her analysis of the UK experience over six years, identified particular implementation problems common with imported programmes or policy transfer more generally, such as context, parent selection and staff qualifications. Featherstone (2009) and Gillies (2005) both argue that the term parenting tends to obscure the issue of gender and the continuing gendered roles of care in families. Instead of parents, should mothers and fathers be the focus of both common and separate initiatives? Lucas (2011) calls for a move from a focus on problem families to family problems, Einzig (1999) and Bidmead and Whitaker (2008) advocate a move towards a health promotion model of parenting support, one based on a positive, pro-social view of parents, children and families. Both Lucas
(2011) and Einzig (1999) argue, in either evaluating or developing a policy or service, questions need to be centred not just on outcome measures, but should be clear about what works, for whom, where, when, how and in what context; parenting is different for every family and thus ideas of support will vary for every family.

2.5.2. Parenting support: theoretical perspectives

Numerous authors speak of an ‘ecology of parenting’, borrowing from Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) work on the ecology of development. Identifying an ecology of parenting thus requires a broader understanding of how parenting influences and is influenced by factors in the ecology (Hoghughi, 2004; Quinton, 2004; Heath, 2004). Ghate, Moran and van der Merwe (2004) point to the usefulness of the ecological approach when considering parenting support, as parenting does not occur in a vacuum: it can be influenced by a range of other factors. However, as they note:

at an operational level, most services address aspects of parenting support that exist at the proximal levels of the ecological model – family and individual factors (and especially individual factors) – rather than factors that are more distal and are located at the social, cultural or community levels, where the roots of disadvantage often lie. Few services are able to tackle directly the background to many parenting problems – poverty, lack of community integration, degraded physical environments, inadequate education, poor housing (Ghate, Moran and van der Merwe, 2004, p.20).

Quinton (2004) breaks parenting support into its separate terms and examines both. In examining support, he identifies three sources (see also

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9 Developed by Uri Bronfenbrenner, the ecological approach to human development argues that individuals sit at the centre of a set of concentric circles which all impact on the individual, and with which the individual interacts. At the centre is the individual child, surrounded by their microsystem, involving the child and who they interact with: parents, family members, friends, professionals and so on. The mesosystem refers to the connections between different settings that the child may experience, such as between home and school. Outside of this is the macrosystem. The child does not participate but is nonetheless affected by it. Government policies, social service provision, media, community are all features of this system. Finally, the macrosystem contains the norms and rules of society (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Moran, Ghate and van der Merwe (2004) and Heath (2004) have adapted the ecological approach for analysing parenting support, placing the parent at the centre of the ecology.
Ghate and Hazel, 2002) – informal, semi-formal and formal – from which various forms of support can be drawn:

- informal support is “the support given by people’s relatives, friends and neighbours” (Quinton 2004, p.23). Its provision is governed by two forces: responsibility - that it is believed right to help others as part of a relationship; and reciprocity - that such support is provided in a balanced way. Here, comfort and advice are the central supports provided, aimed at the everyday tasks which help individuals to get by;
- semi-formal support is that which is aimed at particular needs, in the form of the provision of support and advice for specific problems. Community development-type organisations feature under this category. While some of these supports may be established by statutory bodies, they are run by members for members and are thus categorised under this heading; and
- formal support is the provision of services based on expertise to address specific needs. These are usually provided by statutory organisations, but independent operators also feature.

Heath (2004), in her analysis of the development and provision of parenting support, adopts a similar technique to Quinton, but places a particular emphasis on the role of social support. Numerous definitions abound in the literature regarding social support. However, Cutrona (1996), in her exhaustive review of the literature developed a simple, definition, calling social support “acts that demonstrate responsivity to another’s needs” (1996, p.17), while elsewhere she has expanded on this definition to include “behaviours that assist persons who are undergoing stressful life circumstances to cope effectively with the problems they face” (Cutrona, 2000, p.103). In her review of the theory and practice of family support, Devaney (2011) identified four types of support:
• concrete or instrumental/tangible support – pragmatic in nature, this type of support involves money, time, services or material resources free of charge. Devaney highlights that providing a lift, doing the shopping or minding children are examples of such support, and stresses the importance of not losing sight of what a family or parent may fundamentally need;

• advice/informational support – involves the provision of useful, relevant information aimed at meeting needs, helping with a decision or completing a task. Heath highlights that this can be a particularly sensitive form of support to provide as parenting is ultimately a personal matter. Providing such support can be viewed as “intrusive and not helpful” (Heath, 2004, p.316);

• emotional support – involves providing a listening ear, relating to people, giving a sense of being there for them and “offering them unconditional positive regard” (Devaney, 2011, p.29); and

• esteem or appraisal support – involves giving a sense of worth to someone through words and deeds. It involves providing feedback on people’s actions and aims to build confidence and competence.

In delivering services to families, whether parenting support or otherwise, the importance of relationships in realising the support latent in these different sources is central (Dolan and Holt, 2010). Quintron (2004) argues that services need to fulfil the normal notion of supportive behaviour. In doing so, he claims that relationships are key.

Thus for many, parenting support can be viewed as part of a broader approach to supporting families, generally termed family support. For Gilligan (1995), parenting is central to family support, as is the contribution which social support can make, whether provided formally or informally (Dolan, Pinkerton and Canavan, 2006). Devaney (2011) provides an exhaustive account of what constitutes family support, with its focus on partnership with families, prevention and early intervention, strengths-based, needs-led working. Working with families is built on social support
theory, is relational in nature, underpinned by reflective practice and seeks to promote social justice and children’s rights.

However, defining the term ‘family support’ is not easy. It has been described as a slippery concept or as something which encompasses so many different meanings that it is unclear what it is actually about (Devaney, 2011). Devaney notes the Audit Commission’s definition of family support as “any activity or facility provided either by statutory agencies or community groups or individuals aimed at providing advice and support to parents to help them bring up their children” (The Audit Commission, 1994, cited in Devaney, 2011, p.15). This seems a rather straightforward definition and is akin to parenting support (see below). However, in the Irish context, Murphy (1996) defined family support in a more specific sense. It is:

the collective title given to a broad range of provisions developed by a combination of statutory and voluntary agencies to promote the welfare of children and families in their own homes and communities. These services are provided mainly to particularly vulnerable children in disadvantaged areas, and often include pre-school, parental education, development, and support activities, as well as homemaker, visiting schemes and youth education and training projects (Murphy, 1996, p.78)

Dolan, Pinkerton and Canavan (2006, pp.16-17) identified a set of family support principles which mainly operate at the level of practice:

1. Working in partnership with children, families, professionals and communities;
2. Family Support interventions are needs-led and strive for minimum intervention required;
3. Requires a clear focus on wishes, feelings, safety and well-being of children;
4. Family Support reflects a strengths-based perspective which is mindful of resilience as a characteristic of many children and families’ lives;
5. Effective interventions are those which strengthen informal support networks;
6. Family Support is accessible and flexible in respect of timing, setting, and changing needs, and can incorporate both child protection and out of home care;
7. Facilitates self-referral and multi-access referral paths;
8. Involves service users and frontline providers in planning, delivery and evaluation on an ongoing basis;
9. Promotes social inclusion, addressing issues of ethnicity, disability and rural/urban communities;
10. Measures of success are routinely included to facilitate evaluation based on attention to outcomes for service users, and thereby facilitate quality services based on best practice.

Theoretically, through the provision of social support to parents and children, and the obvious relationship between parent and family, parenting support and family support appear to occupy the same space. The connection to family support and/or family well-being is reflected in some of the policy orientations which underpin parenting support, and the definitions of it.

2.5.3. Defining parenting support and its provision
Veiel and Baumann (1992, cited in Heath, 2004) date the use of the term ‘support’ in literature on social support to the early 1970s, with the appending of ‘parenting’ coming much later. That is not to say that there were not parenting support-type initiatives prior to this. Indeed, child rearing advice has been provided for centuries. Since the emergence of the term and the growth of services in the 1970s, there has been a plethora of different definitions with little consensus on what parenting (or parent) support means as a term, or what it constitutes. As it has grown, it has been possible to identify a range of different policy influences or orientations underpinning provision across Europe: empowerment of parents and children through child development; health promotion; social
inclusion/anti-poverty approaches; education; and family support/well-being approaches (Crepaldi et al., 2011, broadly echoed by Daly, 2013). The history of parent education in the U.S. outlines a similarly varied set of perspectives from which it developed and evolved (Halpern, 1988; 1990).

A range of definitions exist in the literature regarding the provision of support to parents. While some of these are straightforward, others distinguish parenting support from parent support. Others again use the term parent education. A case in point is Pugh, De’Ath and Smith (1994) in their seminal publication Confident Parents: Confident Children use the term parent education to capture a range of initiatives across the lifecycle which can vary in intensity and are aimed at helping parents and prospective parents to understand the needs of their children. In tandem with this, they define parent support as work which tends to be on the personal growth or development of parents, on increasing self-confidence and self-awareness, on improving communication skills or increasing understanding of how children develop, or reducing isolation and on helping people gain greater control over their lives (Pugh, De’Ath and Smith, 1994, p.79).

Moran, Ghate and van der Merwe (2004) identify parenting support as an umbrella term covering many different things, and which can also suggest other forms of provision, such as family support, parent education and parent training. In their review, they define parenting support as “any intervention aimed at reducing risks and promoting protective factors for their children, in relation to their social, physical, psychological and emotional well-being” (2004, p.21). Clavero (2001) and Crepaldi et al. (2011) identify parenting support in simple terms, involving the provision of services and supports to parents as carers, educators and raisers of their children.

Barlow et al. (2007) distinguish between parenting support and family and parent support. Parenting support constitutes formal and informal interventions to increase parenting capacity and skills, confidence, insight,
attitudes and behaviours. Family and parent support involves services which “aim to reduce the stresses associated with parenting. These typically include informal activities which provide social contact and support, relaxation and fun, as well as programmes to develop confidence and self-esteem in adults” (Barlow et al., 2007, p.i). Examples of family and parent support provision include therapeutic services, adult learning, and forms of general support (practical support, confidence building, and respite care for children).

This notion of support for parents is also in the work of Einzig (1999), who stresses the importance of recognising parents in their parenting role and as individuals with their own needs which can impact on their parenting. Einzig suggests a range of interventions to support parents, including supportive employment practices, community-based projects, education and training opportunities, safe play areas for children and economic measures.

The UK is recognised as having an explicit parenting support policy (Coley et al., 2009; Daly, 2012). In its guidance for local authorities, parenting and family support are conflated and defined as the provision of “services, interventions, education and support which improve parenting capacity, parent-child relationships, safeguard and promote positive outcomes for children, young people and families and improve family functioning, through working in partnership with mothers and fathers, carers and other agencies” (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2010, p.9). In attempting to come to grips with the wide range of definitions in the literature and bring some clarity to them, Daly (2013, p.162) outlines two conditions which can aid identification of what qualifies as parenting support:

- That parents are the ‘target’ and how they approach and execute their roles as parents and interact with their children is the main focus of the work; and
The focus is on increasing parents’ resources (information, knowledge, skills, personal, material and social resources) and competencies.

Thus, the definition of parenting support Daly develops is “organised services/provisions orientated to affect how parents execute their role as parents by giving them access to a range of resources that serve to increase their competence in childrearing” (2013, p.162). Such a definition excludes provision and policy fields such as childcare, cash transfers and leave, or child protection and welfare (as parents are not the customary starting point). In relation to this last point, a reading of her definition would appear to permit the inclusion of parents and children together in parenting support, so long as parents are the primary focus.

Taking these definitions into consideration, as well as the specific literature on parenting support and the ground shared between it and family support, it is possible to conceptualise parenting support as nested within broader provision for parents which is indirectly related to their role as parents (parent support), or parenting tasks. Where the intention of parenting support is to directly benefit children, the intention of parent support is to directly benefit parents and thus benefit children. These activities are set within a wider framework of and underpinned by the same principles and potentially delivered by the same group of people who deliver family support. This is outlined in Figure 4 below:
Daly (2011a) argues that in regard to the provision of parenting support, it can be conceived as a continuum. At one end of the continuum is universal provision, characterised by light support and voluntary take up (what is called the pull mechanism) while at the other end is compulsion (the push mechanism), targeted initiatives aimed at parents viewed as needing it and/or are considered to be failing as parents (Daly, 2011b). The light support end of the spectrum is characterised by universal provision of information for parents to use in their parenting roles. At the other end, provision is dominated by parenting programmes seeking behavioural change. These can be parent-based, parent and child-based, or whole-family-based. Access tends to be restricted, and based on criteria.

2.6. Conclusion
In thinking about the literature outlined in this chapter, a number of things are apparent. Firstly, while much of the debate which occurred in implementation studies was heated, in many ways the ‘polar’ approaches of top-down and bottom-up tended to look past each other rather than at
the same thing. Top-down models spoke of control, command and clear objectives, while bottom-up models spoke of individual agency and discretion, of beginning with problems and developing policies from what was experienced. Hybrid approaches did emerge in an attempt to incorporate elements of both, as well as moving beyond both entirely. Notwithstanding the development of hybrid theories, the role of the street-level bureaucrat has remained central to the study of implementation. Subsequent analysis highlighted that, while discretion of these bureaucrats was an important variable to consider, they did not work in isolation from their context. Invariably, their organisational setting had an impact on their role, on their behaviour, on what they did. The Jewell and Glaser framework, and the literature on its factors, is testament to this.

Hybrid theories do have their place, however. One of the main lessons emerging out of these theories was the sense of being selective about particular methods to suit particular contexts. This lesson leads to the second notable point in the literature, the role of ambiguous policy. This thesis has as its focus an examination of the role of street-level bureaucrats and their behaviour when policy is ambiguous. While ambiguity has always played a role in politics, Matland’s (1995) exposition of it as a force in analysing policy implementation and determining analytical approaches made a significant contribution to the literature.

The third key message arising out of this literature is the conceptual foundations of parenting support. As a process, parenting does not take place in a vacuum, but rather within a nested set of domains or levels interacting with each other and with the process which can either support or impede that very process. Parenting and parents often need support at different stages in that process, and for different reasons. Parents may need information support with a particular query, practical support for an errand, or may need specialised support for a more prolonged period of time. In response to this, sources of support are accessed. It may be from
informal networks, like family and friends, it may be from semi-formal groups in the community, or it may be from formal providers. It may be sourced by parents for parents, or for the whole family. It may be offered to parents, for parents or the whole family. It may be aimed at the process of parenting, or at the wider ecology in which that process occurs. Notwithstanding this depth and variation in theoretical and practice terms, this study firmly locates parenting support within a broader context of family support. Thus, the phrase family and parenting support is used.

In Ireland, as we will see in chapter four, family and parenting support is ambiguous, implicit, implied but not stated in government policy: law, policy document, strategy statement or plan. Given such a situation, we are left wondering, if practice has evolved, ahead of policy so to speak, and parenting support is being provided by government organisations, what can governments learn from practice? What do street-level bureaucrats do in implementing a policy which is at best ambiguous? How does their organisation frame what they do, or does it? What is the role of the parent? Perhaps most importantly, what does family and parenting support look like on the ground?
Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The emergence of the bottom-up perspective in implementation studies encouraged a greater focus on the role of the implementer in the policy process. Rather than analysts simply being concerned with decision makers’ and formulators’ attempts to control implementation ‘from above’, they began to recognise that those closest to the recipients of policy could exert significant influence on the outputs and indeed outcomes of policy. As outlined in section 2.2. of chapter two, implementation theory has since sought to move beyond top-down/bottom-up distinctions in various ways. In adding to this debate, Matland (1995) introduced the concepts of ambiguity and complexity as determinants for selecting the use of a top-down or bottom-up perspective in implementation analysis. He theorised that where policies register little conflict, and where they are ambiguous in either means or goals, bottom-up analysis was the most suitable approach to analyse the implementation process. In particular, he suggested that in such situations, context matters.

At its most fundamental level, this study explores how the activities of family support workers – as street-level workers – are mediated by their organisation and their clients when implementing family and parenting support policy. This chapter outlines and justifies the methodology chosen to address this aim. Following this introduction, section 3.2. briefly restates the research rationale and specific research questions central to the study. Section 3.3. presents the research strategy for the study while section 3.4. describes the research context and the associated design. Section 3.5. discusses the ethical considerations of the study, while section 3.6. discusses reflexivity and my role as researcher and evaluator. Section 3.7. addresses the limitations of the research. Section 3.8. concludes the chapter.
3.2. Rationale and research question

As outlined in section 1.3. of the introductory chapter, the rationale for this study stems from a desire to know more about the context of street-level bureaucratic behaviour in the implementation of family and parenting support policy in Ireland. It aims to add to the relatively small body of knowledge on the implementation of family and parenting support policy internationally through examining how organisation mediates the activities of these bureaucrats. It also aims to add to the body of work emanating from implementation studies through applying a particular analytic framework in a different policy and administrative context. Both these aims can be achieved through answering one overarching research question which is the focus of the study:

*Is the Jewell and Glaser framework useful in exploring the impact of organisational context on street-level bureaucratic behaviour when an ambiguous policy - namely family and parenting support - is being implemented in an Irish context?*

In this regard then, the study is centred on examining the role different factors have on street-level bureaucratic behaviour. In addition, the study is also concerned with characterising the policy arena. As will be seen in chapter four, this policy in Ireland lacks any particular definition or goal, but not the means to implement it.

To answer this question, it is necessary to break it down into constituent and sequential parts:

a. how is the implementation context of family and parenting support policy in Ireland ambiguous?;

b. what is the relationship between street-level bureaucratic behaviour and organisational factors (three of the six factors of the Jewell and Glaser Framework) when implementing family and parenting support?;
c. what is the relationship between street-level bureaucratic
d behaviour and client factors (the remaining three of the six
factors of the Jewell and Glaser framework) when
implementing family and parenting support?

To answer these questions, the research strategy for the study is now
outlined.

3.3. **Research strategy**
Sarantakos (2005) highlights that research strategies can encompass a
number of different aspects and sub-aspects. They involve taking positions
on the nature of being or the world around us (ontology), what we can
know about that world and how we come to know it (epistemology). These
positions inform how our research is to be conducted (methodology), the
planning and execution of this research (design) and the particular
techniques used to gather data (methods). Crotty (1998), in conceptualising
research in a similar manner, also emphasises the role and influence of
theoretical perspectives in any strategy, a point stressed by Bryman (2001),
who notes that the majority of research seeks to build on or test a theory
or theories. Both Crotty (1998) and Sarantakos (2005) propose broadly
similar frameworks, which illustrate the basic elements of the research
process. Patton (2002) posits a number of questions for the researcher to
consider in undertaking research. He also asks the researcher to consider
their own role in the inquiry process – how voice, choice and value
interjects into the research process and analysis. This is returned to later in
the chapter in the section on reflexivity.

Figure 5 below outlines these frameworks combined, which serves to guide
much of this chapter. Although Patton (2002) does not offer a reflective
question regarding the choice of particular methods, one is added in here
for completeness – *how do we find out?*
### 3.3.1. Ontology and epistemology

Ontology deals with the very question of being. It concerns the nature of the world in which we live, and whether it exists independent of our knowledge and interpretation, as something objective, or whether the world is effectively ‘constructed’ and thus is different for different groups of people in different contexts at different times (Marsh and Furlong, 2002). These two positions are generally represented by objectivism and constructionism (Bryman, 2001) or, in other terms realism and idealism (Snape and Spencer, 2003).

Objectivism is a position which states that there is a world or ‘external reality’ which exists independent of the belief of individuals and their understandings. In this position, whatever is being examined is viewed as a separate entity, an object (Bryman, 2001) and can be fully known and verified. Constructionism, on the other hand, asserts that reality “is only knowable through the human mind and through socially constructed settings” (Snape and Spencer, 2003, p. 11). Thus, entities, categories and phenomena are constructed by social actors (research participants, for

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**Figure 5: Research strategy framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ontology</th>
<th>What do we believe about the nature of reality?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Epistemology</td>
<td>How do we know what we know?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical perspective</td>
<td>What is worth knowing? What questions should we ask?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology/Design</td>
<td>How should we study the world?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods/Instruments</td>
<td>How do we find out?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: adapted from Crotty (1998), Patton (2002) and Sarantakos (2005)*
example, and researchers) through interactions, and are revised all the time. While some argue that these meanings can be shared (subtle idealism), others suggest that it is not possible for interpretations of reality to be collective or communal, that there is no single reality at all but rather merely a collection of socially constructed realities (relativism) (Creswell, 2007; Marsh and Furlong, 2002; Snape and Spencer, 2003).

Bryman (2001) highlights that at the centre of debates about epistemology is the question of whether the social world can be and should be studied like a natural science, with the same principles, procedures and ethos, or whether it is something different from the natural one and thus requires a different way of looking at it. More generally, epistemological concerns are ones which focus on the nature of knowledge, and how such knowledge contributes to us knowing what we know. As such, in the words of Crotty (1998, p.9), “epistemology bears mightily on the way we go about our research. Is there objective truth we need to identify [...] or are there just humanly fashioned ways of seeing things [...]?”

In a similar vein to ontology, there are two broad churches within epistemology. On the objectivist side, positivism lays claim to the logic of natural sciences as its key tenet (Crotty, 1998). It stresses the value of accuracy, precision and measurement, believes that values should be removed from analysis, seeks to produce inductive generalisations from deductive designs and views the world as deterministic, following strict causal laws (Sarankatos, 2005). On the constructionist side, interpretivism’s basic assumptions include that there is no objective reality and thus research focuses on the construction of meaning by participants/actors. Since the world is constructed by those who live in it, meanings emerge from individuals’ interaction with the world and their perceptions of it. These meanings are fluid; they are not fixed (Sarankatos, 2005).

Between these polars, modern realism has emerged. While ontologically positivist, realism leans towards relativism in an epistemological sense
(Maxwell, 2010). It posits that while there is a world which exists independently of what we know about it, there are elements of it which we cannot see. However, in trying to understand that world we inevitably engage in construction, we interpret from our own perspective. Thus, “there is no possibility of attaining a single, “correct” understanding of the world” (Maxwell, 2010, p.5). The best we can do as researchers is “infer to the best explanation” of the reality that exists (Hollis and Smith, 1990, cited in Marsh and Furlong, 2002, p.30), while acknowledging that there are other potentially valid explanations or accounts of that reality (Maxwell, 2010). Thus modern realists argue that, while there are not multiple realities, there can be different, and equally valid, perspectives of the one reality (Maxwell, 2010), a multifaceted reality (Snape and Spencer, 2003). As such, it is the job of the researcher “to emphasise the critical importance of respondents’ own interpretations of the relevant research issues and accept that their different vantage points will yield different types of understanding” (Snape and Spencer, 2003, p.19).

It is in this vein that the study is conducted. In inquiring about the utility of the framework, it examines the perceptions of worker and supervisor, and how they construct the world around them. Through analysing these different perspectives, in addition to gathering other forms of evidence, I present a view of the world of street-level work which is the reality for these workers. It does not negate that other perspectives of that same reality exist (see section 3.7 of this chapter, limitations).

3.3.2. Theoretical perspective
Bryman (2001) discusses the different meanings of theory in social research. He cites the work of Merton (1967) in differentiating between grand theories and meso-level theories. Grand theories are those which have a high level of abstraction and operate at a general level. Examples of these include functionalism, symbolic interactionism and poststructuralism. Meso-level or middle range theories are those which “tend to fall somewhere between grand theories and empirical findings” (Bryman,
In the study of public policy and administration, the majority of what is studied is at the meso level: “the linkage between the definition of problems, the setting of agendas and the decision making and implementation processes” (Parsons, 1995, p.85). These middle range theories operate in a limited context, in a particular area of inquiry.

Theoretical perspective can also relate to previously published literature in the area of inquiry. While literature reviews often do not focus exclusively on the published material relating to a particular theory exclusively, the theory is often latent or implicit in such reviews. Reviewing the theory in this sense can act as an impetus in a number of different ways: to address apparent inconsistencies in existing research; to examine identified gaps in knowledge of the theory and add to it; to test a theory or elements of it in a different context; or to test new ways of undertaking research on the theory in response to perceived deficiencies in existing or ‘given’ methods (Bryman, 2001).

Theoretical perspective can also be concerned with the extent to which theory guides the research process. Given its focus, the study is firmly grounded in the theoretical literature of policy studies, and in particular, of implementation analysis. Matland’s (1995) contribution to the implementation literature serves to contextualise the study through describing policy characteristics and their resulting implementation characteristics. However, it is primarily the work of Lipsky (1980) which forms the theoretical backbone of the study. It provides the foundation for street-level analysis and illustrates how it can contribute to a greater understanding of implementation and, given its bottom-up conceptualisation, the policy process. It also provided the impetus for the development of the Jewell and Glaser (2006) framework. As a result, associated theoretical material relating to street-level behaviour and policy implementation arising from existing material on the various factors of the Jewell and Glaser framework is important.
The literature on family and parenting support as the policy area examined also provides theoretical perspective. In particular, its characterisation of the role of families as supposedly being in partnership with family workers is significant as it feeds directly into the context of street-level work. In seeking to expand the framework, the growing literature on co-production was used. It is useful material as it offers a potential way of operationalising a principle of family support which suggests that services should be developed, delivered and evaluated in partnership with families. It also feeds back into the constellation of factors in the Jewell and Glaser framework which focuses on the street-level worker – client interaction (workload, client contact and authority).

3.3.3. Methodological design
Sarantakos (2005, p.31-2) notes that methodology is “a research strategy that translates ontological and epistemological principles into guidelines that show how research is to be conducted [... it is] closer to research practice than to paradigms”. However, in practice, much research rarely begins from the position of ontology or epistemology but rather with interest in a social problem, a question or an issue which requires exploring (Schutt, 2006). Indeed, there is a growing number of commentators who argue against the selection of methods on the basis of paradigmatic beliefs. For some, the use of different methods is a pragmatic consideration alone, doing what is doable, practical and realistic (Bryman, 2001; Patton, 2002; Snape and Spencer, 2003). For others, such pragmatism represents a paradigm itself (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004), while for others again it is simply impossible to do quality research and stick only to one perspective; instead research skills can be taken from a range of perspectives (Seale, 1999).

The choice of methodology for this study was driven by a number of ‘real world’ factors. The first was the context of the study. The researcher was undertaking an evaluation of Mol an Óige as it was being implemented by child and family services in Mayo and Roscommon. As a result, the
methodology was predetermined in discussion with the commissioners of the work, and with colleagues in the Child and Family Research Centre. It was a mixed methods study, utilising elements of a realist evaluation perspective in drawing conclusions about the efficacy of the intervention for children and families. This study, therefore, was established within the confines of the evaluation already underway.

In undertaking the first phase of the evaluation, I explored the potential to use the existing methodological approach and associated methods to answer my research question. In so doing, I explored the existing literature on implementation research, which was the second factor in choosing the methodology. Hill and Hupe (2009) have identified that, in relation to examining influences on the behaviour of street-level staff, single-agency case studies where behaviour is examined qualitatively are particularly prevalent and relevant (see also Winter, 2002). Jewell and Glaser (2006) also used a case study approach to their work, and deployed qualitative methods, specifically observations, to gather their data. Lipsky’s (1980) work was grounded in a qualitative framework, also using observations to generate his theory. Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003) arguably used the most elaborate methodology to analyse street-level behaviour, combining interviews with questionnaires, and analysing organisational documentation to provide background for the policy and organisational setting. Interestingly, the use of a questionnaire was designed to describe the frontline workers, with the interview data being given prominence. In contrast to some other analyses of street-level behaviour, they did not undertake direct observations of practice in most cases, but undertook casual or informal observation of the workers themselves and their working environment immediately before or after interviewing, which fed into their overall analysis.

When the existing literature on researching implementation was considered, the researcher viewed the evaluation framework as providing suitable opportunity to generate data to address the research question.
This study seeks to build on previous street-level research, and mirroring the work of Maynard Moody and Musheno (2003), is interested in the workers’ perspectives, the workers’ voices, in this case on how certain factors affect their behaviour. While observations of practice were desirable (although ultimately could not happen – see below), observations of the form described by Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003) were undertaken to supplement interview and survey data which focussed on the street-level bureaucrats, their managers and how they perceived their work to be constructed.

**Case study approach**

While not utilising all the elements of case study research design, this research does possess elements of the case study approach. Yin (2003, p.13) states that a case study involves an empirical enquiry “that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. While originally thought of as an individual in early studies, a case can be an organisation, a social group, a family, a community (Schutt, 2006) or even an event (Bryman, 2001). The case study approach is the most suitable when seeking to examine ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions, when seeking to provide thick descriptions, and when the context of actions is central to the research question, or “highly pertinent to your phenomenon of your study” (Yin, 2003, p.13).

The literature cites a number of advantages and disadvantages associated with case study research. The most notable advantage is that, as an approach, case study research allows in-depth, intensive interrogation of a phenomenon, whatever that may be (Bryman, 2001). A second strength is the use of different methods to generate multiple sources of evidence. This in turn permits corroboration and convergence of findings by way of triangulation (Yin, 2009). A third strength lies in the approach’s focus on the contemporary context of what is being examined. Case studies emphasise the life experiences of participants involved, in their natural
settings (Sarantakos, 2005). Thus, they can be said to capture unique features which can unlock our understanding of particular situations that other approaches alone (e.g. large scale surveys) may miss (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Finally, the very nature of case studies means that unanticipated events can be dealt with and incorporated readily (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007).

There are three central criticisms or cited disadvantages of the case study approach. The first is the lack of rigour. Yin (2003) identifies that in many situations the researcher can be sloppy, is not being systematic in their data collection and allows their bias to influence findings, the interpretations of them, and the subsequent conclusions drawn. Notwithstanding the retort to such criticism that subjective bias can apply to all research approaches and methods, not just case studies (Flyvbjerg, 2006), Yin (2003) and others (e.g. Lewis and Ritchie, 2003) argue that this problem can be addressed in two ways. Firstly, through using various different data sources to gather evidence and secondly by having a transparent analytical strategy which allows the reader to follow and easily identify how interpretations and conclusions are arrived at. These points are addressed respectively in sections 3.4.3. (data collection), 3.4.4. (data analysis) and 3.6. (reflexivity) below.

The second criticism involves the length of time which case studies can take, and the large, unreadable documents which tend to result from them. As Yin (2003) outlines, such criticism arises from the perception of case studies done in the past, but that this is not necessarily the case now. While ethnographic studies may require long periods in the field, many case studies are undertaken without such commitments being necessary. Indeed, he notes that some studies can and are done now without recourse to leave the library or the office, due both to the nature of the case and advances in technology. Additionally, others have noted that, given the narrative style of many research reports, case studies are often more readable than those produced through other strategies as a result of
their emphasis on the everyday, real world experiences of participants and their tendency to be written for lay audiences using non-professional language (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Thick descriptions, often a feature of case studies and qualitative research more generally, do not necessarily have to result in voluminous accounts (Evans, 2012).

The third – and perhaps most noted – criticism of the case study approach is the inability to generalise from them and thus their relative insignificance compared to other approaches (Bryman, 2001). Yin (2003) notes that the tendency in research methods literature to compare generalisation from statistical data and analysis (generalising for a population from a sample, for example) with generalisation from multiple or single case studies for the purposes of theory advancement is an error. In addressing this concern, Yin stresses the role of analytic generalisation, and the power of typical cases, which are representative of those found elsewhere, in developing, testing and extending theory (Yin, 2009).

Hartley (2004) and Evans (2012a), building on Yin’s work, both note the importance of the researcher focusing on analytical generalisation as opposed to statistical generalisation in stating the value of their case study. This is particularly so where individual and organisational behaviour is being explored, as Hartley (2004, p. 331) notes:

The detailed examination of processes in context can reveal processes which can be proposed as general [...]. The detailed knowledge of the organisation and especially the knowledge about the processes underlying the behaviour and its context can help to specify the conditions under which the behaviour can be expected to occur. In other words, the generalisation is about theoretical propositions, not about populations.

Evans (2012a), emphasising the contribution of Burawoy (1991), extends this by suggesting that the power of case study research is that it provides an opportunity to look at “theories of general structures [e.g. a bureaucracy] and examine how these structures operate and interact in particular, often anomalous cases” (Evans, 2012, p. 70). In seeking to make
analytical generalisations, Hartley (2004) stresses the importance of good research practice, but also using existing literature to aid the generalisation process. A single case study can be the basis for generalisation and grounds for further testing, and a clear conceptual/theoretical framework can aid such generalisation through connecting findings to theory and literature, rather than findings simply forming a narrative. In relation to this study, analytic generalisation is thus a central element of its contribution to knowledge about the organisational context of street-level bureaucratic behaviour and policy implementation, as alluded to in section 1.3.1. above (rationale for the study), and sections 3.7 (limitations) and 8.6. (conclusion of the thesis) below.

**Mixed methods**

Although there is a tendency for case studies to take a qualitative approach, and emphasise direct observation (Lewis, 2003), Yin (2003) argues that this is not always necessary. Case studies can mix quantitative and qualitative approaches and need not always contain data from direct observations. However, the case study approach does require a number of the most appropriate data sources so as to aid triangulation. These sources can be derived from mixing perspectives and/or methods. It has become recognised in much of the literature on research methods – although not exclusively - that the use of particular methods is not as linked to particular epistemological positions as originally thought and that mixing methods is methodologically sound. Some have tended to prioritise the importance of the research question and as such have devised their methods as a ‘best fit’ (Creswell, 2011). Such pragmatism is viewed in some quarters as being a paradigm in itself which can overcome the limits of more traditional ones (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004), while for others its use simply bypasses paradigms altogether in favour of what is realistic, practical and doable in a data gathering sense (Bryman, 2001; Patton, 2002; Snape and Spencer, 2003).
In addition to these justifications, Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1989) provide five reasons for adopting a mixed methods approach:

- triangulation: to seek convergence, corroboration of correspondence of findings derived from different methods;
- complementarity: to seek elaboration, enhancement, illustration and clarification of the results of one method against those of the other(s);
- development: to seek to use the results from one method to help develop or inform the other, including sampling, implementation, or measurement issues;
- initiation: to seek the discovery of paradox and contradiction, the recasting of questions, objectives or results from one method with those of another method; and
- expansion: to seek to extend the breadth and range of inquiry by using different methods for different research components.

This study adopts a mixed methods approach to data collection for a number of the reasons outlined above. Firstly, the study seeks to draw in different perspectives about the role of the organisation in street-level behaviour and assess them against each other. The study does not seek to bypass ontological or epistemological positions in favour of pragmatism, but rather seeks to draw in as much data as possible to enable the researcher to come to a view on the nature of the reality which exists.

The second reason is for triangulation. Method triangulation is used so as to enrich the nature of the research data, increase the amount of knowledge about a subject or research topic, and to contribute to a higher degree of validity and reliability (Sarantakos, 2005). Validity is described as the correctness or precision of reading findings (Snape and Spencer, 2003) and can be separated into internal and external validity. Internal validity refers to the strength of the match between the “researcher’s observations and the theoretical ideas they develop” (Bryman, 2001, p.273) while
external validity refers to the extent to which the findings can be generalised across other settings – something which is often problematic for qualitative studies. Reliability is also described in two ways. External reliability refers to the ability of a study to be replicated in other settings, again something which can be problematic in qualitative studies. Internal reliability relates to the extent to which the researcher is being faithful to what the data says (Bryman, 2001).

The study uses a parallel mixed methods design. Such designs consist of the “concurrent mixing of quantitative and qualitative studies carried out as separate studies, with the qualitative component taking a more dominant role” (Hesse-Biber, 2010, p.68). While many such designs are often used so that quantitative data can “window-dress” qualitative data, in this study the survey was used to query, challenge and confirm findings from the interview data. The primary aim of using the survey data was for the purposes of triangulation. More generally, the choice of individual methods is discussed in the next section.

3.4. The research process

3.4.1. The evaluation of Mol an Óige
As noted above, this study occurred within the context of an evaluation of Mol an Óige which I undertook while working in the Child and Family Research Centre.

The objectives of the evaluation were to:

- describe and locate Mol an Óige in its theoretical, policy and service, geographical and socio-economic context;
- assess the implementation of it in relation key areas including:
  - direct work with children and families;
  - staffing and resourcing;
  - training and ongoing support and advice;
  - referral criteria and processes; and
  - fidelity to the underpinning theoretical models;
- assess the outcomes for participating children and families;
• reflect the views of stakeholders on the programme;
• assist the project in collating and interpreting internal project data;
• assess wider impacts of Mol an Óige in areas such as skill development and collaboration; and
• identify factors contributing to or detracting from its success (in the areas of implementation, staff development and outcomes for children and families).

As noted above, a number of different methods, both qualitative and quantitative, were used. These are outlined in Table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Overview of methods in Mol an Óige evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literature review</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quantitative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Questionnaire administered with frontline staff at baseline and after a period implementing the programme;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• standardised instruments (x 3) to measure outcomes for children and families who participated, who received support from staff implementing the programme;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• anonymised data template to be completed on each family, detailing number of children and parents worked with, the goals of work, length of time in receipt of support;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• monitoring data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualitative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Semi-structured focus group and one-to-one interviews with:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o staff;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o supervisors;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o child care managers;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o other health and social care professionals in the locality;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Boystown staff in Nebraska.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• documentary analysis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data collection began in late 2008. Upon beginning interviews with frontline family support staff at the start of the evaluation exploring their experiences of practice, I began to think about them as street-level bureaucrats, engaging with their organisation and with clients in their day-to-day work. This arose from my own interest in public administration and teaching it to undergraduate students since 2003. In a more pragmatic manner however, I was also looking for an opportunity to undertake a part-time PhD thrusing some of my work in the Child and Family Research Centre. Having discussed the potential of the project to provide a platform
for this work with my supervisor and colleagues in the Centre and the School of Political Science and Sociology, I decided to base my work on the Mol an Óige evaluation. I felt it provided an opportunity to explore street-level behaviour in an Irish context, specifically in an Irish family and parenting support context.

3.4.2. Exploring the literature and exploiting the evaluation
Once I had decided to undertake my PhD research within the context of the Mol an Óige evaluation, I began to explore two sets of literature, which are outlined in chapters two and four. The first set was on policy implementation. I had a general familiarity with some of the classic texts such as those detailed in chapter two, and was aware that there was a debate between proponents of different perspectives. I was also aware that some thinkers had sought to ‘bridge the gap’ by developing new models for implementation analysis, or new models of the entire policy process. Matland’s (1995) approach appealed to me for two reasons. Firstly, it embraced the stagist approach to policy analysis, a perspective I was a utiliser of and a defender of. Secondly, it seemed to speak to the nature of the area I was working in. As will be highlighted in the next chapter, family support is often described as fuzzy, woolly, or lacking definition (Canavan et al., 2000). While the Irish State was funding a range of family support initiatives, there was no clear definition of what it was in policy terms or what its aims were.

The second set of literature explored related to family and parenting support policy. The assessment of the policy as being ambiguous arose from the exploration of Irish material. It revealed an overwhelming focus on the practice of working with children and families. Any discussions of policy tended to refer to one section of the 1991 Child Care Act which states that the (then) health board\(^\text{10}\) may provide family support services. No further definition was provided. Other countries were examined. In the

\(^{10}\) As will be outlined in chapters four and five, services for children and families were provided by regional structures of the health services in Ireland until January 2014.
UK, there was an abundance of policy documents and academic and grey literature on family support, and on family and parenting support. This differentiation piqued an interest: why didn’t Irish policy differentiate between families and parents? Discussions with colleagues revealed that other countries had policy statements about supporting parents and families. One colleague was working on an Australian project, the aim of which was to contribute to the development of a national parenting support policy framework.

I returned to the Irish literature to discover that, like family support, there was plenty of work going on at the street-level to support families, and parents in particular. But every children and family services area could, and was, doing it differently. Mol an Óige appeared to be an indicator of that – a local evolution. Upon returning from undertaking fieldwork after another interview with a family support worker, I recalled him describing his work. While a mother had approached his service because she was at her “wits-end” due to her son’s behaviour, the focus of the intervention was, in the main, the mother. The worker said he was involved in helping her to address her son’s behaviour through using the Mol an Óige approach. This help involved giving her the skills to cope with tantrums, with slamming doors, with aggressive behaviour. It also involved him giving her his mobile number which she could contact him on if it was required, and calling to see her at the weekend if needed. This to me did not sound like the client-processing attitude of Lipsky’s pressurised street-level bureaucrat.

I revisited the policy implementation literature again to explore what affects street-level workers in their work. I discovered that, in addition to Lipsky’s analysis, there was growing literature on this area. Much work from the United States, in particular, examined the impact of various factors on street-level work in the implementation of different policy areas (especially activation), however there was also a burgeoning literature emanating from Europe. This literature provided insights into how
different organisational factors might affect street-level behaviour, even where policies were well defined, goals clearly identified. Some contributors pointed to the work of Jewell and Glaser (2006) in bringing different factors within one framework. In the conclusion of their article, they point to the potential utility of their framework for those interested in generating specific implementation knowledge in a range of settings, but that it required further exploration. Mol an Óige offered an opportunity to examine the utility of this framework in a different policy and administrative context: family and parenting support in the west of Ireland.

3.4.3. Data collection in the context of the evaluation
I examined the evaluation plan to identify opportunities for data collection for my study. Figure 6 below identifies the relationship between the data collection for the evaluation and for this study, and the extent of the data collection. The sampling process for the study is outlined before each particular method is discussed.

3.4.3.1. Sampling
This study adopted a purposive sampling approach, in line with studies which are qualitative or predominantly qualitative in nature (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Purposive sampling means that the researcher “selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). Furthermore, within purposive sampling, the specific approach adopted here may be described as theory-based, where the researcher samples “people on the basis of their potential manifestation or representation of important theoretical constructs” (Patton, 2002, p.238) so as to examine and potentially elaborate on the theory (Creswell, 2007, p. 127). The sample frame for this study was determined by the evaluation already underway. The sample was selected due to their role as street-level bureaucrats, as line managers of street-level bureaucrats, or because they were decision makers and/or had a role in the development of the Mol an Óige programme.
EVALUATION METHODS

- Interviews with child care managers
- File analysis data
- Interviews with frontline workers
- Interviews with supervisors (7)
- Staff surveys – baseline and follow-up
- Interviews with Boystown staff
- Standardised instruments
- Interviews with other professionals
- Interviews with parents and children

STUDY METHODS

- Interviews with child care managers (1)
- File analysis data
- Interviews with frontline workers (24)
- Interviews with supervisors
- Staff surveys – baseline (22) and follow-up (22)

PhD FOCUS

- The ambiguity of family and parent support policy in Ireland
- The role of organisational factors in implementing family and parent support
- The role of client related factors in implementing family and parent support

Policy and service context review

Participant observation as evaluator

Figure 6: Relationship between evaluation methods, study methods and study focus
3.4.3.2. Qualitative methods

3.4.3.2.1. Interviews
Minichiello et al. (1990, cited in Punch, 2005) identify a continuum of interview types, from the structured variety at one end (with examples such as survey interviews or clinical history taking) to unstructured interviews at the other end (such as oral or life history interviews). In the middle are semi-structured interviews, described as in-depth or focused. Semi-structured and unstructured interviews are firmly in the qualitative tradition. The interviewee’s point of view is given greater emphasis than in quantitative research, with the interviewee given greater leeway to expand and digress. Thick descriptions and detailed answers are desired and encouraged (Bryman, 2001).

In semi-structured interviews, there is a greater degree of formality but some flexibility is retained. The interviewer asks key questions “in the same way each time and does some probing for further information, but this probing is more limited than in unstructured […] interviews” (Arthur and Nazroo, 2003, p.111).

Kvale (1996) provides a list of the types of questions interviewers can ask, the majority of which are responding questions to what the interviewee says. Such types can include introductory, follow-up, probing, specifying, direct, structuring and interpreting. In the interviews for the study, many of these types of questions were asked, albeit to varying degrees dependent on each interviewee’s responses.

All interviews began with an opening statement stating the purpose of the interview (for both the evaluation and this study), the extent of the data collection (the number of workers being interviewed), the nature of participation (voluntary and can stop at any time) the extent of anonymity (you will only be identified as a worker/supervisor) and that each interviewee could ask why particular questions were being asked at any stage (Patton, 2002; see also section 3.7. below on ethics). Following this,
an introductory question was asked. From my own experience of undertaking applied social research for a number of years, I found this type of question a useful settling device. Asking an interviewee to tell you about their job, what they do and what it entails often allowed them to become more comfortable with the process. However, it also served a second purpose in providing rich contextual data for each respondent (Arthur and Nazroo, 2003).

Follow-up questions were also a feature, (what do you mean by that answer/particular word?), as were probing questions (could you elaborate further on that?, how was it useful in meeting the needs of parents?), and interpreting questions (do I understand you correctly when you say ...?). In addition to Kvale’s question types, the researcher always finished each interview with a summary of the issues covered, an invitation to the interviewee to say anything else they felt was important to say or that had not been spoken about, and an expression of gratitude.

For this study, two groups were interviewed. In the case of the 24 family support workers and their seven supervisors, similar interview schedules were used. This was important as the core of the study was concerned with how a range of factors mediate street-level behaviour. Certain elements of the questioning were altered slightly to take account of the different positions held by worker and supervisor (for example, in relation to notions of authority and power). In relation to child care managers, different topic guides were developed given these different roles and the reasons for interviewing them: how Mol an Óige came to be implemented in Mayo and Roscommon.

All 31 interviews with family support workers and supervisors for this study were conducted between March and June 2012. They were all conducted in person, in the office of the worker. In one case, an interview with a supervisor had to be suspended due to a work emergency. This was completed over the phone the following day. In each case, the topic guide
was forwarded to the interviewee at least 48 hours beforehand (in most cases it was one week beforehand) so it could be considered. Interviews were between 1-2 hours in length.

The interview with the child care manager was conducted in June 2010. This focused primarily on the context in which Mol an Óige was established, and its introduction in Mayo and Roscommon. The interview with the child care manager was undertaken in his office.

3.4.3.2.2. Anonymised qualitative file data
As part of the study, basic anonymous data from files were collected, containing information pertaining to age, number of parents involved, number of children involved, length of time parents and children were worked with, and family goals for the work. Due to no consent being provided, complete documentary analysis of all 273 case file could not take place. Instead, the researcher developed a data template for staff to complete on each family – without any identifying information being included – they worked with. The primary qualitative data arising from the template related to the goals of the interventions.

3.4.3.2.3. Participant observation
Observation in qualitative data collection is a useful method of gathering data, particularly when non-verbal communication is important, when behaviours are the focus of a study, or when a process is being examined involving several actors (Ritchie, 2003). Observation is usually defined by whether it is structured or unstructured, and whether the observer is a participant or a non-participant. This study used participant observation, but in the same manner as Maynard-Moody and Musheno’s (2003) work on street-level behaviour. It was largely unstructured and flexible in approach, utilising informal conversation (Sarantakos, 2005) about things such as how the worker’s day was going, how they found the physical environment in which their office was based, or what the weather was like. The main purpose was to generate a sense of the environment in which workers undertook some of their duties, how they interacted with each
other, and in a small number of cases, how they interacted with their supervisors. However, in a small number of cases, the banal types of questions opened up conversations which related directly to the focus of this study. For example, in one instance I recounted how I had travelled to the worker’s office by public transport as my car had broken down. This opened up a conversation with the worker about the importance of having one’s own transport for their work. A supervisor joined this conversation and recounted how a previous colleague had to transfer to a different part of the service because she could not afford car insurance and thus could not travel to family homes.

These conversations usually took place prior to an interview occurring, or when I was having a process meeting with some supervisors about other elements of the evaluation. I jotted notes down on these interactions as the interviewee prepared for the interview, or when other people attending the process meetings were taking their seats or getting a cup of tea. More often than not, these notes were simply a few bullet points which were fleshed out when I returned to my own office.

3.4.3.3 Quantitative methods

3.4.3.3.1. Survey
As the implementation of Mol an Óige began, a practice-orientated survey was developed to generate a baseline picture of practice. It was posted out to 24 workers who were trained to deliver the approach with families, but had yet to begin fully using it. The survey was designed with the evaluation in mind as opposed to this study. However, when I decided on the focus on this study, I re-examined the survey. I coded it using the main factors of the framework being examined and concluded that it provided an opportunity to generate a pre and post implementation picture of street-level practice amongst this group of workers. Also, given the methodological orientation of the study, mixed methods, the use of survey data would contribute to the process of triangulation of the qualitative
data, and aid a more robust understanding of qualitative results (Hesse-Biber, 2010).

The follow-up survey was administered in November 2011 to 24 workers. It was initially administered using the online survey tool SurveyMonkey. However, some workers experienced difficulties accessing and/or completing the survey due to software issues and access to PCs (itself a finding). As a result, a paper copy was forwarded out to all workers in January 2012 to be completed in hard copy format. These surveys were collected by the researcher when visiting the research setting for interviews or meetings.

In both the baseline and follow-up surveys, completion by workers was anonymous. I could not confirm which survey was completed by which worker. The anonymisation of survey responses had consequences for the level of analysis which could be applied in comparing the two sets of results—the surveys could not be paired. It is also important to note that some of these workers were not part of the original group of 24, and some of the original group did not feature in the follow-up group. Across both cases, the number totalled five. While small, it did also affect the particular choice of test used for quantitative analysis.

3.4.3.3.2. Anonymised quantitative file data
The case file templates gathered a small amount of quantitative data about the extent of provision of Mol an Óige: the number of parents worked with by workers in each case, the numbers of children worked with, the length of time which the workers engaged with the family for, and whether formal assessments were undertaken. The template also requested that data be provided on the total number of children in the family and the total number of parents in the family. However, this was only provided in 88% of cases for parents and 80% of cases for children.
3.4.4. Data analysis

3.4.4.1. Analysing interview data

Checking for errors

Translating raw interview data into analytic findings involved a number of steps. Firstly, each interview was transcribed verbatim by a professional transcription service as part of the evaluation process. However, as Gibbs comments (2007), ensuring accuracy is one of the strongest arguments against professional transcription or using speech recognition software. So as to ensure consistency and accuracy of transcription (e.g. emphasis, punctuation and completeness), I read each of them while simultaneously listening back to the interview, making adjustments where necessary and annotating them with my field notes. Once satisfied with the veracity of the transcripts, I began coding the interviews.

Coding

As Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 56) state, codes are “tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study”. They can be assigned to words, sentences, or whole paragraphs of text. Thus coding - reviewing notes and transcripts and dissecting them meaningfully – “is the stuff of analysis” (1994, p.56). Deductive and inductive reasoning are the two primary approaches used in the generation of codes. However, these are best thought of not as hard and fast distinctions but loose tendencies (Creswell, 2007; Hesse-Biber, 2010). Much of the literature on coding reveals the importance of the use of some theory or framework in the generation of codes before transcripts are initially examined, and the preservation of space in the review of data for new codes to emerge from it. While some of these writers tend to favour the dominance of an inductive approach over a deductive approach in the use of both in the coding process (Miles and Huberman, 1994), others argue that both patterns imposed on the data and those emerging from it are of equal value and are a valid way in which to interrogate it (Lewis, 2003; Ritchie, Spencer and O’Connor, 2003; Fereday and Muir-

This notion of abductive coding thus shares much ground with the form of analysis used in this study: thematic analysis. Often used but rarely defined, thematic analysis “is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79). It can allow for the direct setting out of data, as well as permitting further interpretation of it in line with the area of inquiry. It has been described as an ecumenical approach to analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). Some writers have argued that thematic analysis can be either exploratory (content) driven or confirmatory (theory) driven (Gibbs, 2007; Braun and Clarke, 2006), yet others have shown that it can be both, and in such a manner is more faithful to the data (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Others again have argued that such a distinction is somewhat extraneous: no exploratory or inductive analysis is completely atheoretical (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012). ‘Emergent’ themes are often very similar to those which appear in literature on a topic (Bazeley, 2009).

The qualitative data from the interviews with family support workers and supervisors were analysed in three phases using the software package, NVivo.

The first phase was conducted in two steps. The first step was deductive and involved applying the main categories of the Jewell and Glaser framework to the data. This was done through the creation of codes (termed nodes in Nvivo) which corresponded to each of the factors of the framework, namely authority, client contact, incentives, workload, knowledge and expertise and role. This was a rudimentary allocating of data to the appropriate nodes for further investigation. The second step was also deductive, and applied sub-factors of the Jewell and Glaser framework to the first wave of coded data. The outcome of this process
was a larger set of ‘child’ nodes under each ‘parent’ node. A screenshot of this in the case of the factor ‘incentives’ is presented in Figure 7 below.

**Figure 7: Screenshot of processing ‘incentive’ child nodes/codes in NVivo**

The second phase was more inductive. The researcher examined a clean copy of each transcript in hard copy. This permitted the researcher to examine the data afresh, without any annotations attached to it, so as to discover potential points of interest which were emerging from the data. This revealed a number of issues which had relevance for the study, but which were not spoken about in a manner in interviews which explicitly linked them in the first and second coding phases. For example, the way workers and supervisors spoke about and perceived the policy context in which they operated appeared from the data to link with how they perceived themselves and their action. The workers saw themselves as supporting families, as supporting parents, and Mol an Óige provided a way of allowing them to give effect to family support principles. The importance of the policy context was not a focus in the first and second phases of coding, but the third phase allowed this type of information to be picked up. It and other examples were coded into separate nodes under a separate heading (see Figure 8 below).
The final phase of coding sought to examine the emergent nodes in the context of the *a priori* codes determined by the framework. In this phase, the content of each node was read and re-read, and the independence of each node examined in the context of other nodes. Some nodes were thus merged into others, and new nodes were created separately. Given that the central question in the study was the utility of the framework, these factors were retained as the parent nodes guiding the writing up of the chapters six and seven. However, the child nodes altered in this final phase. As my thinking evolved when re-examining the data, additional annotations were made at points in the analysis of codes derived in the previous phases. Memos were drafted to bring together my observations arising from these annotations and contribute to my thinking on the extent to which the framework captured all of what was occurring at the street-level. These child nodes were labelled as potential points of limitation or extension of the framework in this different context, for example “client contact: co-production of implementation”.

NVivo permits the identification of sources (cases) readily in the data. The researcher decided that, instead of coding the workers and supervisors separately, they would be coded together. The researcher was of the view that coding the two groups together would provide greater context for the analysis. A review of each code would easily permit the identification of
who was speaking – worker or supervisor – so potential confusion between the voice of each interviewee could be readily overcome.

3.4.4.2. Analysing qualitative data from anonymised files
Qualitative data from anonymised files related to the goals identified in each case. These provided important contextual information for the study about the nature of the work undertaken between family and worker. Data templates completed by family support workers were returned to the researcher in hard copy form. To begin the process of analysing these a number of steps were followed.

The first step was to establish an Excel file to enter the data into. The researcher decided to use Excel for this purpose due to its ability to handle large amounts of qualitative data, sort and count data with ease. It also permitted the inclusion of the small amount quantitative data emanating from the templates (number of parents worked with, total number of children in the family) and lent itself to the immediate production of graphs and images. In the Excel file, each row represented a case. In total, templates for 273 cases were received by the researcher. Data was entered pertaining to each of the goals as written on the template by the case worker. Examples of these are drawn from the Excel file and presented below in Table 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case No.</th>
<th>Goal one</th>
<th>Goal two</th>
<th>Goal three</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Learn parenting techniques</td>
<td>Parental anger management</td>
<td>Parent more positively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Child to take less responsibility for parents' well-being</td>
<td>Dad to access alcohol addiction service</td>
<td>Mum will access money support service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mum will learn new parenting skills</td>
<td>Young person to learn to manage anger</td>
<td>Family spend time together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Child accept instruction from mother</td>
<td>Mum will parent positively</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Establish boundaries at home</td>
<td>Parent consistently</td>
<td>School to challenge child's behaviour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The reporting of goals by workers varied from the very detailed to the very general. To introduce some consistency to the process, the second step involved examining all goals individually and coding them, where possible using some of the labels contained in the templates returned by the workers. This resulted in the generation of a set of overarching or thematic codes, and a catch all code ‘other’ which contained goals such as financial management, arrangement of step-down care, and improve personal care.

The contents of each of the thematic codes were re-examined to assess whether some stood as a category on their own, or needed to be integrated into another category, or remain as originally categorised. For example, a number of goals relating to ‘criminal behaviour’ were originally categorised under “behaviour”. However, it was felt that there were enough goals specifically mentioning criminal behaviour to warrant a category on its own. In addition, the goals in the ‘other’ category were re-examined and in some cases re-coded to existing categories. A small number of goals which were unique were left in the “other” category.

Below in Table 3 are the goals from Table 2 above, categorised.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case No.</th>
<th>Goal one</th>
<th>Goal two</th>
<th>Goal three</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Parenting support</td>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>Parenting support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>Service support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Parenting support</td>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>Family relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Parenting support</td>
<td>Parenting support</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Parenting support</td>
<td>Parenting support</td>
<td>School support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>Parenting support</td>
<td>Behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Parenting support</td>
<td>School support</td>
<td>Parenting support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>School support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4.4.3. Analysing survey data
The survey administered to staff was analysed using the software Statistical
Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The introduction of such software
presents a number of advantages, including fast processing, reliability,
accuracy and accessibility of sophisticated statistical test to non-
statisticians (Sarantakos, 2006). In this study, the preparation of the data
for analysis followed the steps outlined by Pallant (2011), namely preparing
the codebook; creating a file and entering data; and screening and cleaning
data.

Preparing a codebook
Before any analysis occurred, it was necessary to prepare a codebook
(Pallant, 2011, pp.11-13). The codebook gives each variable in the survey a
unique name which clearly identifies the information contained in the
variable. In total, 83 numbers of variables arising from the survey were
entered into the SPSS file. Potential responses of survey participants under
each variable were given a distinct numerical code to aid analysis in SPSS.
For example, statements requiring rating via a likert scale were coded
1=strongly disagree, 2 = disagree and so on. The survey also contained a
number of open-ended questions. In this situation, the researcher entered
all the various responses into Excel, reviewed and grouped them, and then
assigned a numerical code to each group and entered them into SPSS. For
example, in response to the question “which theories inform your work”,
the review process revealed nine different theories which were then
assigned a distinct number between 1 and 9, thus allowing them to be
coded.

Creating a data file and entering data
Once the codebook had been prepared, a new data file was created in SPSS
(Pallant, 2006, pp.26-42). The variable names and definitions were entered
and the appropriate measure selected (e.g. nominal for gender, scale for
likert scores). Following this, data was entered for each case. When the
second round of surveys was completed, they were entered into a separate
file with the same codebook and the two files were merged for analysis purposes.

**Screening and cleaning data**
Once all the data was entered for the study, it was screened and cleaned (Pallant, 2006, pp.43-49). Screening involves checking the data for errors, which fall outside of the limits of the variable as coded. This was done through running an analysis of descriptive statistics. No errors were uncovered in this process which were not unknown during the data entry process (i.e. missing values for some cases), therefore no cleaning of data was required. Once this had been established, the file was ready for analysis.

**Coding the survey to the framework**
As outlined above, the survey was not initially developed with the Jewell and Glaser framework in mind. Therefore, when the survey was identified as containing potentially useful information for the study, a process was required to identify which survey elements would most appropriately fit under which factors. As outlined above, the researcher examined the survey and began to code it deductively according to the factors in the framework. Once coded, he engaged in a discussion with the Principal Investigator on the evaluation about the validity of including particular questions under each factor. Suggestions were received which were considered, and the coding process revised.

**Analysis**
Two main forms of analysis of the survey data were undertaken for this study. The first was descriptive analysis. This provided an overview of the characteristics of the sample in the study. It was decided that, for the purposes of the study, time 2 respondents would be used for this form of analysis. While a small number of respondents were not included in time 1 but included in time 2, or vice versa, the researcher felt that the time 2 respondents would provide the most accurate picture of practice relevant
to the qualitative data. The descriptive analysis of the sample at time 2 is outlined below.

The study also used the survey data to compare differences (if any) between the two sets of survey data. Specifically, the researcher was interested in seeing whether there were any differences in the workers’ perspectives on various elements of the survey, such as workload, (planning hours, administration hours, delivery hours), or aspects of knowledge and expertise (how they rated their skills since using Mol an Óige), and whether these differences were statistically significant. Statistical difference implies that any observed differences between two groups is not down to chance, but rather is real and that some other forces are at play (Schutt, 2006). Statistical difference is usually indicated by scores which are at a level less than .05 (95% chance) and less than .01 (99% chance). Dependent on the sample size, different statistical tests can be conducted.

In this study, a non-parametric equivalent of an independent sample t-test—a Mann-Whitney U test—was conducted to compare pre and post Mol an Óige scores. The Mann-Whitney U test was selected for two main reasons. Firstly, as a non-parametric test it was selected because of the sample size (n = 22). Due to a small sample size, there is no way to test accurately whether the sample is normally distributed. Therefore, a central assumption of parametric tests – that the sample obeys a normal distribution – cannot be realised and thus it makes sense to use a non-parametric test. Related to this issue is the knowledge accumulated through the evaluation that the samples at time one and the sample at time two did not completely overlap. There were five cases where either staff who completed the survey at time 1 had moved to different jobs, or were on maternity leave at time 2, or staff at time 2 were on maternity leave at time 1, or were in different jobs. Thus, as the samples were not identical, the safer statistical approach was to treat them as two different or ‘independent’ samples. The second reason was that, as the completion
of the surveys was anonymous, it was not possible to ‘match’ or ‘pair’ time 1 and time 2 responses. Therefore, it was not possible to apply the non-parametric alternative to paired sample t-testing, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test.

When using the Mann-Whitney U test, an important consideration in comparing differences is ensuring that any negatively worded items are reversed. Negatively worded items are often used in surveys to ‘throw’ the respondent and prevent any bias. Reversing them so that all scores are in the same direction is an important step. Also important in the reporting of results of the test is the identification of medians rather than means (given the non-normal distribution). Thus, further calculation of median values is required when results are being reported and presented.

In total, 22 survey responses were received from an eligible sample of 24, representing a response rate of 92%. Nineteen responses were female, while three were male. The mean or average age of respondents was 36.55 years, with the median value being 36 years and the mode being 34 years. Respondents had a wide range of experience, from two to 21 years, with the mean being 12.73 years, and both the median and mode being 12 years. The majority (n =13, 59%) described themselves as project workers, with social care workers and child care leaders making up the remainder of the representation. Social care studies was the primary qualification of respondents (n = 7, 32%), followed by childcare (n = 6, 27%) and youth work (n = 5, 23%), and a range of others. All respondents had at least a level eight degree 11, with a further six possessing a postgraduate degree. The average working week was 30.82 hours, with the median and mode responses being 35 hrs.

3.4.4.4. Analysing quantitative data from anonymised files
The small amount of quantitative data gathered from templates was analysed using basic statistics functions in Excel. Mean values were

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11 Higher education degrees correspond to levels 6 (certificate) to 10 (PhD) on the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).
calculated for the length of intervention, while total numbers for parents and children worked with were also calculated.

3.5. Ethics
An application for ethical approval for all aspects of the evaluation – and thus all aspects of this study - was made to NUI Galway’s Research Ethics Committee in May 2009. The application template and process ensures research undertaken by University staff and postgraduate students is conducted in an ethical manner. This involves the completion of a 25 page application form and engagement with the Committee should further clarification be required. The application for the evaluation detailed the proposed methodology, specific methods, recruitment processes, consent, confidentiality and anonymity, risk and reciprocity. As the evaluation study planned research with vulnerable groups – children – the researcher was aware that there were additional ethical issues which required addressing.

In the communication from the Committee a number of issues were highlighted for consideration before full approval was granted. The Committee raised the issue of anonymity of staff participating in the study. It felt that there was potential for individuals to be identified given the relatively small geographical and service area in which the evaluation was taking place and the proposed small sample size. Thus, it recommended that processes be put in place to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of all participants in the study. In response to the Committee’s concern, the researcher proposed that demographic data about the samples would only be used in a general way. Specifically, this would involve describing the sample in general terms only in any output of the study, and not linking particular characteristics of the source with data presented (e.g. a worker in y service in Roscommon town thought..., a supervisor in County Mayo was of the view...). This was acceptable to the Committee and implemented in both the evaluation and this study.
The issue of consent was not raised in the Committee’s response as it was deemed to be addressed adequately in the original application. For the interviews with workers and supervisors, explicit written consent was not sought. However, each staff member was written to by email, inviting them to participate in the study. The email clearly stated that participation was voluntary. This was followed by a telephone call in which I provided an overview of the research, the proposed areas of the interview, the process for anonymity and confidentiality and the intended use of the data. The participant was provided with an opportunity to ask any questions at this stage. Many workers at this stage raised the potential to be identified in the research given the close working relationships they had, both within and across the two counties, and their desire that this not happen. However, given the steps to address the Ethics Committee’s comments, their concerns were alleviated. All workers would be identified as simply that: workers.

Closer to the arranged date for the interview, the topic guide was forwarded to the participant. At the beginning of the interview, its purpose was again outlined, its voluntary nature explained and an opportunity provided to the participant to ask any questions. Each participant was then asked if they were happy to proceed.

3.6. Reflexivity
As Alberty (2002) states, “facts do not organise themselves into concepts and theories just by being looked at” (cited in Patton 2002, p.597). In any study which contains qualitative elements, the role of the researcher warrants consideration. The interpretation of interviews and other forms of qualitative data can be affected by the views of the researcher, their own inbuilt biases and beliefs, and the context in which the study is undertaken (Punch, 2005; Dowling, 2006; 2008). Reflexivity can be thus viewed as an attempt to counter these factors. It is viewed at its most fundamental level as having a self-awareness right throughout the research
process, from design to final output so as to enhance the credibility and reliability of the research (Creswell, 2007).

Patton (2002) sets out a number of reflexive questions which can be asked by a researcher about him/herself but also about the research participants. A number of ‘screens’ are also presented through which these questions can be refracted (Table 4 below):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions about the researcher</th>
<th>Questions about the participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do I know?</td>
<td>How do they know what they know?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do I know what I know?</td>
<td>What shapes and has shaped their worldview?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What shapes and has shaped my perspective?</td>
<td>How do they perceive me? Why? How do I know?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With what voice do I share my perspective?</td>
<td>How do I perceive them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do I do with what I have found?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Screens: Culture, age, gender, class, social status, education, family, political praxis, language, values.

These questions were used throughout the research process to ensure that objectivity and neutrality were strived for and to identify and counter where bias may creep in (Snape and Spencer, 2003). In considering these questions, a number of factors heightened my awareness regarding my role in the process.

The first factor related to my professional role as an evaluator. Such a position is imbued with a form of power, especially when, as in this context, what is being evaluated is the outcome of local decision making and expenditure, as opposed to simply something imposed from a national agency. There can be pressures for it to succeed, and to be independently seen to succeed, as an evaluation might show. Such a position of power can cause individuals to act in particular ways, to say things which they feel the evaluator may want to hear, or which may give the impression that the programme is or is not working. In taking such positions, there was also an awareness of where the research participants were coming from, what their stake was in the evaluation and how they wanted to be perceived as
workers. These were considerations which impacted significantly at different points in the research process.

The second factor related to the organisation I belonged to. The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre is an international exponent of family support, engages in international debates on it and educates professionals through its Masters programme in family support studies. Belonging to the Centre and contributing to all aspects of its work has the potential to create a sense of perspective bias. From knowing relatively little about the concept of family support when I joined the Centre in 2006, I was quickly exposed to it on several fronts. From a practice perspective through teaching on the MA programme, from an academic perspective in working closely with the colleagues in the Centre on publications, from an applied perspective in undertaking formative evaluations of some family support services, and from a policy perspective in working with the National Specialist for Family Support on policy projects.

The third factor is a more personal one and related to a longer standing interest in public administration. I am the son of two street-level bureaucrats. My mother was a nurse, my father a civil servant for the Department of Agriculture who worked directly with farmers on various schemes on behalf of the State. Both are retired now. As a child, sick days from school were often spent in the back of my father’s car as he travelled across northwest Ireland meeting farmers about milk recording and supervising it at farm level.\textsuperscript{12} Ten years later, while studying political science in University, I took a course in Irish administration. It was through this, and subsequently in my role teaching public policy and administration, that I became aware of the work of Lipsky and was drawn to it. I brought this interest to the Child and Family Research Centre. I argued, along with colleagues, for a “privileging of practice” in the face of imported,  

\textsuperscript{12} The Milk Recording Programme was initiated by the Department of Agriculture in 1977 out of concern about the lack of information about milk yields from dairy herds across the State.
manualised programmes to deliver support to children and families (Canavan et al., 2009), explored to what extent family support services included families in service implementation (Coen and Kearns, 2013), examined the path towards integration of Irish domestic violence policy (Kearns and Coen, 2014) and examined the field of evidence-informed policy and practice (Higgins, Canavan and Coen, 2014).

3.7. Limitations of the research
This research contains a number of limitations. The first limitation relates to the use of case study design in the methodological approach. As outlined in section 3.4.3. above, a number of criticisms are prevalent in the literature regarding case study research, including a lack of rigour and the potential for bias in conducting research. The most notable concern, perhaps, is that case studies are not generalisable, a criticism which is well documented in existing research methods literature (Bryman, 2001, Sarantakos, 2005).

In this regard, the research presented here has certain limitations. It presents an analysis of a small scale study in a specific policy domain focusing on a particular level of the policy process in Ireland. In this sense, while it does present important data regarding the nature of family and parenting support provision in Ireland and street-level behaviour, it does not purport to serve as a wide-ranging generalisation of policy implementation per se. However, the strength of this approach is in what has been labelled a typical case (Yin, 2009) and its ability to contribute to analytical generalisation for theory (Yin, 2003; Hartley, 2004; Evans, 2012). The case study here provides a suitable context to address the research question – the utility of the Jewell and Glaser framework – and thus contribute and extend our theoretical understanding of street-level bureaucratic behaviour. As a study, it sets out to explore and expand on the theory, framework and literature which underpin it (Yin, 2003; Hartley, 2004).
The second limitation of the research concerns particular aspects of the data collection process. Observation is often a central method in street-level research. Lipsky’s (1980) pioneering work was based on observations, as was Jewell and Glaser’s work (2006), with which this study is concerned. While observation was a specific part of the research design for the evaluation, consent was not received by any family participating in the study to observe a worker engaging with them. This was disappointing, although completely understandable. Families were often in difficult situations and had enough to deal with in overcoming their issues without me sitting in the corner watching and writing. Observation would have required an intrusion on family life which both Lipsky, and Jewell and Glaser, were not faced with. In their cases, observations occurred in service offices and employment centres. The work of Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003), however, points to the potential of exploring street-level behaviour without recourse to formal observations, as do arguments by Tummers and Bekkers (2014), whose work emphasises the importance of exploring how workers experience reality through their own perceptions.

Another limitation concerned some of the interview data collection, in particular with the child care managers. While one child care manager was interviewed early in the research process, the second child care manager was not available due to illness. This limited the perspective generated in the study about the local policy environment when Mol an Óige was initiated. It was planned to interview the first child care manager towards the end of the research to gain their perspective on the process. However, the individual in question was also unavailable due to illness at this time.

A fourth limitation concerns the impact of the ethical guidance received by the Research Ethics Committee for the study. The requirements for anonymity and confidentiality of workers and, in particular, not linking particular characteristics of any source with data presented prevented any cross-site analysis of data to explore potential differences between services. While this was not a major limitation given that the
overwhelming majority of workers participating in the study worked for the one organisation, examining their experiences alongside the small number working for another organisation had the potential to further the research aim.

A final limitation of the research concerns the absence of the voice of families. Citizens receiving services are an important part of the street-level perspective. Although families were interviewed as part of the evaluation study, the focus of the interviews was predominantly on the impact of Mol an Óige on family life for them, and how things have changed. While the potential for re-interviewing families was discussed with my and colleagues, I decided against it for two reasons: firstly, for many families, getting to where they then were was challenging enough and asking them to retrace again the events of often turbulent lives over the previous number of months or years had the potential to cause great amounts of stress and strain; and secondly, the only families who agreed to be interviewed for the evaluation were those for whom Mol an Óige had been successful. Although the case files revealed that almost 40% of cases closed unsuccessfully, none of these families agreed to be interviewed. Thus, re-interviewing these families had the potential to skew the picture of implementation.

3.8. Conclusion
This chapter has set out the overall methodology for the study. It began by setting out the research question and rationale for the study before describing the overall research strategy. This included providing detail on the ontological, epistemological and methodological approaches taken in the study. It proceeded to detail the context of the research study – an evaluation – before describing the data collection process. The data analysis process was then outlined in detail followed by an examination of the issue of reflexivity in the research. The ethical considerations of the study were listed and their impact on the study discussed before the limitations of the research were explored.
Chapter Four: Family policy and family and parenting support in Ireland

4.1. Introduction
In Ireland, as elsewhere, family policy has tended to fluctuate between normative and positive actions, trying to shape to varying degrees what families are and what they do, while at the same time attempting to respond to families’ needs and demands. Normative notions of an ‘ideal’ family dominated policy discourse in the early 20th century, but gave way in the latter quarter to state responses to family forms, functions and problems as they arose. Developments in the last decade suggest, however, that any explicit concern with family in policy now has been refocused to a concern predominantly with children. The use of family as any sort of meaningful concept has been somewhat lost.

This chapter outlines the policy and service context for the study. The first section examines the development of family policy as an area for state activity over the past forty years and explores its current standing. The next section examines the evolution of family policy in Ireland. It details the Irish State’s transition from having a laissez-faire attitude to family issues to an increasingly interventionist and coordinated approach to family policy. Following this, the third section explores the evolution and development of family support services in this context of more explicit family policies. In particular, attention is paid to the position and role of parents in family support developments.

4.2. The emergence and development of family policy
Family policy has only emerged as a phrase in the lexicon of social policy over the past forty years, although policies affecting families have been implemented for much longer than this. Kammerman and Kahn (1978, cited in Kammerman, 2010), in a seminal contribution to the field, identified that family policies can be explicit or implicit. Explicit policies are those with particular objectives, such as preventing child poverty,
promotion of particular family formations, or caring roles within families. Important here is the recognition that the family is the particular focus of the policy or policies; it is the object or target of the policy. Implicit policies are those which are related to other areas but which may affect families in particular and unintended ways. An example of this is the provision of care for children to facilitate labour market participation by parents, and the potential implications for family life, especially for those who parent alone (Hill, 2006; Millar et al., 2012) but also for those who are in two parent families (Daly, 2004).

Taking implicit and explicit perspectives, it is possible for family policy to have a myriad of objectives (specific or otherwise). Some elements identified in the literature include (Adema, 2012):

- Policies which are focussed on family creation;
- Child rearing and/or economic support for it;
- Care giving;
- Reconciling work and family life;
- Reducing child poverty and maltreatment;
- Promoting child development; and
- Promoting gender equality in paid and unpaid work.

Governments can use a number of measures to try to achieve such objectives, such as (Kammerman, 2010):

- Cash transfers;
- Policies assuring time for parenting;
- Early childhood care and education;
- Legislation on inheritance, adoption, guardianship, child protection, foster care;
- Contraception and related health policies (e.g. such as assisted human reproduction and/or maternal health);
- Personal social service programmes;
- Child health programmes; and
• Housing allowances and policies.

It is clear, particularly from this last list, that a wide range of measures can be aimed at improving the lot of families – parents, children and even extended members. However, not all measures may be aimed directly at families but nonetheless impact them. Other measures, such as those in the personal social services arena, can impact directly on families, for example those relating to family functioning.

In addition to looking at family policy as either explicit or implicit, it is also possible to conceptualise family policy as a series of interactions between the State and the family along a continuum ranging from support to coercion (Daly and Clavero, 2002) with various measures used to try and achieve particular objectives. Fox-Harding (1996) describes seven models which help to contextualise particular policies that can affect families in implicit or indirect ways. In introducing such models, she highlights that the nature of the relationship between family and the state is often unclear, disputed, and shifting:

Boundaries between state and family are often confused and contested, with ambiguous areas of responsibility. Where defined family ‘responsibilities’ are not met, the state may respond in a variety of ways. There is a power relationship between family and state, but the direction of influence is not just one way: families can affect how the state behaves, as well as being on the receiving end of its actions (Fox-Harding, 1996, p. 177).

In Fox-Harding’s work, seven models are presented as heuristic mechanisms to develop a greater understanding of the role the state in regards to family life. These are outlined in Table 5 below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Overarching characteristic</th>
<th>Potential policy measures</th>
<th>Example of policy goals (and potential measure used to achieve)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extreme 1</strong></td>
<td>Clear intention of enforcing certain preferred behaviours, patterns and family forms, and prohibiting others.</td>
<td>Criminal law; material penalties; separation of individuals from family unit; informal manipulation (e.g. stigma, social exclusion), making alternatives to preferred behaviour unpleasant.</td>
<td>Population growth or control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Authoritarian</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intermediate models</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enforcing responsibilities</strong></td>
<td>Clear policy objectives around “enforcement of particular patterns [...] directed to circumscribed areas, e.g. obligation to maintain financially, or care for, certain relatives in certain defined circumstances” (Fox Harding, 1996, p. 187).</td>
<td>Criminal law; financial penalties; other penalties; separation from family unit.</td>
<td>Child maintenance; social order through parenting responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in specific areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manipulation of incentives</strong></td>
<td>Use of rewards and penalties to encourage preferred patterns of family behaviour. Policy message can be often mixed, particularly when the message becomes out of date compared to what societal values are.</td>
<td>Financial incentives (tax and benefit); legal incentives (around illegitimacy for example).</td>
<td>Promoting child rearing within heterosexual marriage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>Overarching characteristic</td>
<td>Potential policy measures</td>
<td>Example of policy goals (and potential measure used to achieve)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working within constraining assumptions</td>
<td>Policy is based on assumptions of how families operate, and thus limits alternatives to the assumptions. Policy less clear, less defined, no overarching goals.</td>
<td>Financial incentives and penalties.</td>
<td>Policies which are based on male breadwinner, female homemaker assumptions. Single parent benefit payments based on non-cohabitation. Young adults ineligible for certain welfare payments because they are viewed as dependents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substituting for and supporting families</td>
<td>No conscious attempt to influence families, although it may unintentionally occur. This model contains two positions which can be seen to be in contrast to each other</td>
<td>Service to support families to continue to function, either by keeping them intact, or separating them temporarily; welfare benefits.</td>
<td>Family support; child protection; fostering (short and long-term); adoption.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responding to needs and demands</td>
<td>Reactive policies responding to needs and demands as they arise. Initiative with families and not the state to take up various provisions. No formal family policy as such.</td>
<td>Services for individuals financial payments.</td>
<td>Health service; Education service; social security payments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>Overarching characteristic</td>
<td>Potential policy measures</td>
<td>Example of policy goals (and potential measure used to achieve)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme 2</td>
<td>No intentions towards the family whatsoever, indeed, there is no ‘family policy’. The state would relate to individuals in their private lives as individuals only.</td>
<td>Measures not designed to achieve, but rather reflect the individualistic nature of the State’s interaction with people, e.g. complete individualisation of tax social security transfers.</td>
<td>None. State simply intervenes to enforce contracts between people, upholds criminal law.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fox-Harding (1996)

As Fox-Harding highlights (1996, p.202), these models are neither without their problems, nor are they without alternatives. In addition, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive: measures such as welfare payments can appear in most if not all models. Indeed, many states may pursue different elements of different models at the same time, using similar or different measures. However, seen as a continuum, these seven models do provide us with a framework to characterise family policy developments in any country. As Daly and Clavero outline (2002, p.44) the models are helpful because they draw attention to the prescriptive elements or effects of policy. The reality is that family policy, like all other policy areas, circumscribes behaviour and sets out an incentive structure for particular courses of action over others.

This can be seen in the development of family policy in Ireland, where a number of measures were developed and implemented incrementally, with such developments ranging simultaneously across a number of the Fox-Harding models set out above, and with similar intentions.
4.3. Family policy in Ireland

4.3.1. Formative influences on Irish family policy

A number of authors have commented on the factors which have shaped family policy in Ireland since the late 19th century. Fahey (1998a) identifies two paradigms which have shaped public policy on the family since before the foundation of the State. The first, patriarchal familialism, views the family as a self-sustaining unit, with roles clearly defined, differentiated and complementary. This patriarchal model of family life was, he argues, favoured by public policy and public opinion and shaped by a catholic dimension which influenced which policy choices succeeded and which did not. Those which succeeded tended to relate to the promotion of family-based private enterprise in the rural economy and the importance of private property; those which did not tended to violate catholic social thought and threaten to impinge on the Church’s role as curator of Irish family life.

The second paradigm Fahey identified is egalitarian individualism, which he states was “well underway by the 1970s” (Fahey, 1998a, p. 392) but indicators of which were present in the previous two decades. This paradigm involves a mix of liberalism, secularism, humanism and feminism, which, he argues, tended to be unified in an Irish context simply through their opposition to the Church. This paradigm manifests in more individualised roles in society and more personal approaches to behaviour; state provision for groups such as unmarried mothers; and the development of therapeutic and “less punitive” services for disruptive children (Fahey, 1998, p.390). The State takes a more regulatory and interventionist role, seeking to protect individuals, children born outside of marriage and children subject to abuse.

Fahey’s characterisation of the second paradigm of Irish family policy is not without its critics. Daly and Clavero (2002) note that it mistakenly gives the impression that an individual approach to policy making was pervasive. Social transfers to unmarried mothers could be equally viewed as pro-
family, not individualistic: it was paid to them because they were mothers. Furthermore, they note that such a paradigm shift occurring in the 1960s and 1970s is arguably too early given the changes that were to come about in the 1990s.

Bound up in such a paradigm shift – irrespective of when it fully occurred – is the place of the Catholic Church. It has been widely noted that the Church has been one of the most significant influences on the development of Irish social policy and the delivery of social services (Considine and Dukelow, 2009; Curry, 2011; Daly and Clavero, 2002; Fahey, 1998a, 1998b; Kiely, 1999; Millar, 2003). Fahey (1998b) notes that its influence was through its provision of social services and its teaching. Regarding the provision of social services, the impact of the Church’s role was to increase the output of its services throughout the State. However, it did so with relatively little concern for narrowing inequality in society, resulting in the creation “of a vacuum in services for those at the bottom of the social scale” (Fahey 1998b, p. 415). The Church was a significant provider of services in the health and education field, but also for those in society who found themselves excluded, stigmatised or— for young people — in trouble with the law (Burke, 1999).

Through its social thought, the Church also influenced the role of the State in certain areas. While elements of such thinking were evident prior to the foundation of the State, it was with the publication of the papal encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* in 1931 that catholic social thought became preeminent (Whyte, 1980). Amongst other things, the encyclical promoted the principle of subsidiarity, which broadly stated that issues and matters should be dealt with at the lowest possible levels and thus the State should not take on unnecessary roles for itself (Whyte, 1980). Such a principle had a profound effect on the development of policy and services for families in

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13 Equally, one could interpret the development of therapeutic services for children as being pro-family, as keeping the family together, as opposed to removing a child from the home.
Ireland. Adshead and Millar (2003b) note that the impact of the principle was that family services were conspicuously underdeveloped; subsidiarity “ensured that the State only interfered when the family’s capacity to service its members was exhausted” (Adshead and Millar, 2003, p. 6).

Considine and Dukelow (2009) comment that the principle became the most influential factor which shaped the relationship between family and state, with intervention only occurring in a manner which was “consistent with the Church’s view on men, women and families” (Considine and Dukelow, 2009, p.30).

Linked in with the influence of the Church was nationalism, which also played a role. In the years preceding independence, Irish nationalism became synonymous with Catholicism as Irish people sought to forge a clear impression of an “Irish nation” (Coakley, 2005, p.51). After the State was founded, such nationalist sentiment “resisted the intrusion of what it saw as alien modes of life through the medium of certain kinds of state interaction” (Fahey, 1998a, p.387). The first government of the Irish Free State in 1922 was led by a party – Cumann na nGaedhael – broadly representative of Ireland’s middle class and was conservative in nature, economically and socially. In 1932 it was replaced by Fianna Fail, a party determined to show that it could govern the country responsibly. It was also “aiming at a catholic, conservative republic” (Chubb, 1982, p.107), which it pursued with great zeal (Whyte, 1980). Conservative economic and social policies were also pursued, however, largely as a result of a financially hamstrung State and a civil service determined to pursue a fiscally liberal policy regime with meagre social service provision (Kirby, 2007, p.2).

Both Chubb (1982) and Coakley (2005) add that, in addition to such conservatism, Irish political culture was characterised by an authoritarianism, meaning a respect for and almost reverence of societal leaders and their views, and an intolerance of those who dissented from them. It involved political conformism, loyalty to Church and State and
anti-intellectualism. Individualism and reliance on the family unit was favoured over broader cooperation. Clericalism was also a feature. This was not just reverence to the local parish priest but rather an acceptance of the authority of church teaching and the need for it to be reflected in law (Coakley, 2005, p.62). Whyte (1980, p.362), in his examination of Church – State relations in the 20th century, notes that Irish catholic bishops were known to have influenced 16 pieces of legislation and surmises that it was probably greater. However, he concludes that, overall, the level of explicit contact was not at all frequent considering the number of pieces of legislation passed by the Oireachtas, the Irish parliament. However, as Fanning (2006) and Inglis (1998) have noted, there were other ways in which the influence and power of the Church was exercised. Fanning comments that the Church wielded:

a non-decisional form of power. It had the capacity to mobilise politically in defence of its interests but rarely had to do so because these could be anticipated and addressed in a non-political and non-contentious manner. As good Catholics, legislators and voters were deeply committed to expressing their faith in the laws and institutions of the country (Fanning, 2006, p.12).

Inglis (1998) agrees, suggesting that the reason the power of the Church was so great was that it had the ability to “inoculate Irish minds against the introduction of any legislation which was contrary to its interests” (Inglis, 1998, p. 79). Although there were instances where church and state collided, the relationship was broadly peaceful and consensual (Kennedy, 2001). There was little conflict overall regarding the policy areas which interested the Church most (i.e. health, education, family and public morality). Politicians were loath to expend any political capital they had acquired by opposing church teaching. The Church-State relationship was also symbiotic. The Church preached allegiance to the State; the State and its apparatus – executive, legislature and bureaucracy, the majority of whom were educated in catholic schools – incorporated catholic teaching and values in its work (Inglis, 1998).
4.3.2. Evolution of Irish family policy

Daly and Clavero (2002) identify two phases in examining Irish family policy into the 21st century. The first stage begins with the foundation of the State and stretches to the end of the 1980s, with the second phase covering the 1990s and the turn of the century.

4.3.2.1. 1922 to 1990

Although there were instances where the Church and State did not always agree (Kennedy, 2001, p. 157), the first years of the State were, in general, marked by catholic legislation. The Government introduced a measure to prevent divorce bills from being presented in Parliament;14 as part of the Censorship Act of 1929 it was an offence to sell, distribute or publish material which advocated birth control. In 1935, the importation and sale of contraceptives became an offence (Whyte, 1980). Such influence was most clearly seen in the 1937 Constitution, where the Church-State approach to family policy was shaped by Article 41. Amongst the clauses in the Article are those which recognise the family as a “moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights, antecedent and superior to all positive law”, which the State guarantees to protect in its “constitution and authority”. In addition, the Article affords special protection to marriage “on which the Family is founded”, and seeks to ensure that mothers are not obliged to engage in economic activity outside the home to the neglect of their duties within. However, Article 42 (5) also recognises that the State has a role regarding the welfare of children, particularly where parents fail in their duties:

In exceptional cases, where the parents for physical or moral reasons fail in their duty towards their children, the State as guardian of the common good, by appropriate means shall

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14 Prior to the foundation of the Free State in 1922, any Irish resident who wished to acquire a divorce had to present a private bill in the House of Commons. After 1922, this power transferred to Dublin. The then President of the Executive Council (equivalent to Prime Minister or in Irish, Taoiseach), quickly introduced amendments to the standing orders of the Dáil (regulations of the Irish lower house of Parliament) which permanently prevented any such bills from being presented, but only after three attempts were made to seek a divorce (Whyte, 1980).
endeavour to supply the place of the parents, but always with due regard for the natural and imprescriptible rights of the child.

The Constitution shaped the development of family policy in Ireland for almost the following sixty years. As a result, Kiely (1999, p. 261) notes, the State-family relationship in Ireland could be characterised as:

minimal interventionist, driven by the belief on the part of the state in the absolute privacy of the family. The family unit has traditionally been perceived by society as private and inviolable, and this has been reflected in legislation, the provision of social services and social and family policy.

In short, there was a tendency for the State not to become involved in issues of family business, instead entrusting this to the Catholic Church. Breen et al. (1990, p.101) have asserted that up to the 1970s this minimal intervention resulted in Irish policy being “in word the […] least ambiguous in the area of the family” given the dominance of church teaching amid a church-state orthodoxy. However, in practice, policies tended to shape and corral family life in particular ways.

During this period, the main instruments of family policy in Ireland were primarily financial in nature. These included (Daly and Clavero, 2002):

- Income support to families with children – for example children’s allowance/child benefit, child tax allowance and the family income supplement (FIS);
- Income support measures for families – e.g. widow’s pension, the one parent family payment;
- Tax system conditions – such as different tax allowances for married couples compared to single tax payers;
- Other income supports - e.g. maternity benefit; and
- Services for families – e.g. child and adult counselling.

However, it was clear that there were particular goals around the administration of each of these. It has been suggested that children’s allowance, for example, was introduced in 1944 partly out of concern
about population decline (it was paid for third and subsequent children), although the issue of family poverty was the overriding factor (Cousins, 1995; Ferriter, 2004). While its introduction was viewed as a measure to reduce the need for women to take up employment, the payment was not given to women but the ‘head of the household’ (i.e. the father). Within this particular measure alone, the State can be viewed as adopting different positions on the Fox-Harding continuum: manipulation of incentives and enforcement of responsibilities and responding to needs.

Regarding services for families, these were orientated to children at risk and were mainly provided by religious orders and voluntary organisations, many of whom were aligned with the Church (Richardson, 2005). While this can be characterised in the supporting and substituting for families model, particular authoritarian aspects emerged, if not officially, then culturally. This was especially the case with unmarried mothers, many of whom had no choice but to enter mother and baby homes or county homes, and once there had little opportunity to move on from them (Buckley, 2013). They were separated from their families and from society, so as to ensure a particular view of family life was preserved. They were also discriminated against in the welfare system, and their ‘illegitimate’ children discriminated against in law up until the late 1980s. The feeling of stigma amongst this group of women resulting from both policies and societal values is something which still resonates today (Bradley, 2014).

From the 1970s to the late 1980s, as it moved away from its close alliance with the Church of previous decades, the State pursued policies whose impact was less consistent and more ambiguous.

Other elements of authoritarian control were also present, for example in the controlling of contraception. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 1935 banned the importation, sale and advertising of contraceptives, although it did not prohibit their use. Yet, there were also elements of other models. For example, the Illegitimate Children (Affiliated Orders) Act 1930 provided for the imposition on the father of an illegitimate child an obligation to
support the child and enforce such obligations. Maintenance obligations were extended in the Guardianship of Infants Act 1964 and the Family Law (Maintenance of Spouses and Children) Act 1976 (Kennedy, 2001).

From the 1970s the State took a more direct role in family policy development. The era of patriarchy and orthodoxy was replaced by a gradual era of secularisation (Breen et al., 1990). Political and judicial activism, combined with entry to the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973 and the introduction of equality legislation created a different legal and institutional environment (Breen et al., 1990). The introduction of social welfare payments for those parenting alone occurred in the period 1970-1973 (McCashin, 2004). However, it was not all one-way traffic. Further liberalisation of laws pertaining to contraception were accompanied by referenda outlawing abortion (albeit not completely) and divorce.

Daly and Clavero (2002) comment that, up to the 1990s, “not only was there a tendency to romanticise the family but the depiction and treatment of it as a private sphere brought a reluctance to look inside the family” (Daly and Clavero, 2002, p. 33). They note that it was striking that no clear policy objectives on the family were stated anywhere. In the health policy, Health – the Wider Dimensions, published in 1987 (Department of Health, 1987), there was no significant mention of the family whatsoever. This, despite the Department having overall responsibility for the provision of health and social care services in the State (Kennedy, 1989). Yet, the broad trend was towards a State recognising and responding to social change, albeit within limits.

4.3.2. 1990 to present

By 1990, the State was judged to have realised a new-found autonomy as it moved away from Church influence and family policy emerged as a political issue (Breen et al., 1990; Kiely, 1999). While Nicholls (2006) argues that such emergence is largely down to one issue – the need to increase female
labour force participation through facilitating greater work-life balance – Daly and Clavero (2002) suggest that this is only one of a number of forces at play. Related to the issue of work-life balance and changing patterns of family life, the care needs of both children and older people required different benefits and services. In addition, the emergence of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the findings of a number of inquiries into the mistreatment and death of children (Millar, 2006) and the recommendations of the Commission on the Family (Richardson, 2005) prompted the expansion of family support services in recognition of the need to support families – parents and children. While certain services did exist prior to this decade (Gilligan, 1991), as we will see below in this chapter, they were underdeveloped.

Thus, this period saw the consolidation of existing instruments and the introduction of transformative new instruments (Daly and Clavero, 2002, pp. 51-72). Cash transfers for families with children expanded significantly, increasing fourfold in the case of Child Benefit. Welfare payments were also introduced for low-income working families (Family Income Supplement – FIS\(^\text{15}\)). Improvements in maternity and (to a lesser extent) related leave sought to address some concerns regarding work-life balance. In response to the needs of an expanding economy, and concerns with supporting family life and latterly child development, the State invested in child care provision, culminating in a free pre-school year launched in 2010. Policies, benefits and services for carers and the cared-for were developed. Most significantly for this study, however, was the expansion of family support services and an increased concern with children’s rights (Daly and Clavero, 2002).

The National Children’s Strategy was launched in 2000 with the aim of developing a whole child perspective across government and society. The Strategy contained three goals, one of which was that children would

\(^{15}\) Family Income Supplement is a tax free social security payment provided to employees on a low income and who have at least one child.
receive quality services and supports to bolster all aspects of their development. This was followed by institutional developments such as the establishment of a National Children’s Office within the Department of Health and Children in 2001, the establishing of an Ombudsman for Children’s Office in 2004, the strengthening of the status of the Minister for Children to that of ‘super-junior’\(^{16}\) in 2005 and the establishment of the Office of the Minister for Children (and later, the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs). Such developments were more indicative, however, of an explicit children’s policy as opposed to a family one (Daly and Clavero, 2002, p.71; Richardson, 2005). In 2011, the first Department of Children and Youth Affairs was established with a senior ministerial post assigned to it. This was particularly significant given the limitation on the number of cabinet ministers in Government imposed by the Constitution.\(^{17}\)

Considering the models of family-state interaction, family policy measures in the 1990s can be located across the models of working within constrained assumptions, substituting for and supporting families, and responding to needs and demands. For example, increases in Child Benefit supported the lifting of families out of poverty, but were directed at all families with one or more children as a move to support all parents with the cost of raising children, irrespective of whether the mother works or not (DSP, 2010; Daly and Clavero, 2002). This move was viewed as somewhat at the expense of targeted initiatives such as the Child Dependent Allowance aimed those on low incomes (Considine and

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\(^{16}\) The Irish Constitution limits the number of people in the Government (often called the cabinet) to 15: the Taoiseach and 14 senior ministers with responsibility for government departments. There are also ministers of State (junior ministers) that are appointed with responsibility for particular areas within government departments, or in recent times cross-cutting issues. In the 1990s, to resolve coalition tensions, a practice was agreed whereby the smaller party could have a junior minister with a right to attend all cabinet meetings, but not vote in them. This became a practice in all subsequent coalitions, with such junior ministers becoming known as ‘super juniors’ (Connolly, 2005).

\(^{17}\) Since this research was undertaken in 2012, the State has also reformed family services with the establishment of a dedicated child and family agency, Tusla, in 2014. It also published the new national children and young people’s policy framework in 2014, entitled Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures. In identifying five outcomes for children, it suggested that supporting parents could be a ‘transformative goal’ which could contribute to achieving these outcomes.
Dukelow, 2009, p.378). Additional welfare benefits, such as FIS, can also be
categorised as an initiative to support families. Provision of one year of
free pre-school cover for all children is indicative of a responding to needs
and demands, although it could also be cast as a mechanism to support
parental responsibilities (Nicholls, 2006). Services for children and families
did expand. Despite such developments, however, Clavero (2001, p. 52)
surmised that Irish policy

lacked a set of explicit and/or comprehensive policies regarding
families and children, although it is possible to identify a set of
uncoordinated family-related policies, drawn from a wide range of
areas.

Notwithstanding these measures, Nicholls (2006) has argued that, through
the unchanged Constitution, the State continues to actively intervene in
family life by ‘prescribing’ what a family should look like. While this is not
now socially enforced to the extent it was in the past, it is still a feature of
the Constitution and thus, she argues, plays a powerful role. However, this
is challenged by people such as Canavan (2012), who notes that the
Constitution’s conventional family has been circumvented through
administrative measure, judicial interpretation and a focus on children as
agents in their own right. The passing of a referendum on the introduction
of children’s rights into the Irish Constitution is another signal of this.
Additional changes are also being proposed. Legislation introduced to the
Irish Parliament by Government in 2013, the Children and Family
Relationships Bill, proposes to cover a wide range of family issues, including
guardianship, custody and access, child maintenance and parenting in the
context of parental separation. Most notable, perhaps, is the
Government’s intention to hold a referendum on same-sex
marriage/marriage equality in the first half of 2015.

These steps indicate that the policy discourse, if not the policies just yet, is
shifting. While Canavan wrote (2012, p. 11) that “Irish family policy
remains elusive, with no strong coherence across the diversity of policy
positions and measures that have an impact on it, or consistency in how family is treated”, it could be suggested that proposed legislative and constitutional developments may bring some coherency. However, it will not necessarily introduce any more constitutional consistency, given that the Article which privileges the family based on marriage will remain (Government of Ireland, 2015).

4.4. Child and family services in Ireland
The development of family and parenting support services in Ireland has mirrored the path of family policy generally, and can be broadly divided into two phases – up to 1990; and 1991 to the present day.

4.4.1. Pre-independence to 1990
As previously stated, services for children and families were dominated by voluntary providers, primarily the Church, and bound by constitutional imperatives and social and cultural mores. The services were also bound by the pre–independence Children Act 1908, which remained the overarching piece of child protection legislation until 1991 (Considine and Dukelow, 2009). The Act covered a number of issues, including children who committed offences, and parents who did not care adequately for their children. As Buckley (2013, p. 23) notes, what was central in the Act was “the idea that parents were responsible to the State and its agencies for the care of their children, and punishment of both parents and children would be how this responsibility would be enforced” (see also Ferriter, 2004). The Act did not speak of support or provision of services for or to parents to help them in their duties, but rather of substituting for them. However, practice moved quickly from a solely prosecutorial approach towards a “casework” approach where parents and children were supervised in their own home (Ferguson, 1996; Richardson, 2005), mainly delivered by other voluntary organisations such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) (Buckley, 2013; Richardson, 2005).
The main service instruments utilised under the Children Act were the industrial and reformatory schools, residential services which were provided and run on behalf of the State by religious orders (Curry, 2011). While there was some evidence of ‘statutory lady inspectors’ (Skehill, 2005), these were in the minority compared to church run agencies, such as the Catholic Protection and Welfare Society of Ireland and the Dublin-based Catholic Social Welfare Bureau, which tended to work with families on a “socio-spiritual” basis rather than “socio-legal” one (Skehill, 2005). Nevertheless, these inspectors were charged with visiting homes where children were boarded out (fostered) to provide advice and direction on the care of the children (Buckley, 2013).

Despite this, one agency not within the Church’s grasp, the NSPCC (until 1956 when it became the Irish Society for the Prevention Cruelty to Children) was the principal community child protection agency operating in the State. A snapshot of data from its files between the years 1934 and 1939 provides an insight into the operation of the Society. While neglect was the main factor in the overwhelming number of cases (71%), the next highest category was “advice sought” (18%) (Buckley, 2013, p.76). This, as Buckley notes, demonstrated the help seeking nature of families who realised they could “obtain material aid and assistance” with family life from the Society (2013, p. 76). It also suggested that there was a need for the advice and assistance provided. In many cases, the main reason for children being taken into care was poverty. This was highlighted by the NSPCC in its annual report of 1948-49, in which it stated (cited in Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse 2009 (vol.V), p.8):

[T]he resultant cost of providing for children removed from their parents on the ground of inability to maintain them is much greater than the amount which, if given in Home Assistance, or some other form of allowance, would enable the family to be kept together. [...]Anything] that tends to break it up should evoke the efforts of all the Social Services against such conditions.
Although there was some legislative change in the 1950s and 1960s pertaining to adoption and guardianship respectively, it was not until the 1970s that the ground began to shift regarding services for children and families. One of the first publications which prompted change was *Some of our Children* (Tuairim, 1966) a pamphlet on the state of the residential care system for deprived children in Ireland by a society called Tuairim.\(^{18}\) The society, a “combined think tank and debating club […] which sought to stimulate discussion of political, economic and social issues” (Fitzgerald, 2003, p. 194) highlighted that more needed to be done to prevent children from coming into care. A paper appended to the pamphlet and read to the society in London (Tuairim 1966, p. 53) emphasised the importance of supporting families in their own home:

> Since the basic method of preventing a child from suffering deprivation of home and family life must be to ensure that he receives nurture within his own family, measures which promote this and prevent the break-up of the family unit should be given priority. In Ireland, there is relatively little done to give active economic, social or medical assistance to parents or relatives to prevent the need to remove the child from his home. The objection commonly lodged against such measures by our society is that they would encourage more parents to be irresponsible in providing for their families. But where such assistance is given, as in England, this has not proved to be true. If a community values its children, it must cherish their parents.

Much debate followed the publication of this report on the state of the residential child care system (see O’Sullivan (2009) for a discussion of this debate). This eventually led to the establishment in 1967 of the Committee on Reformatory and Industrial Schools. The scope of the Committee was subsequently widened to consider all children in care (Committee on Reformatory and Industrial Schools, 1970, p.vii).

In its report of 1970 (generally known as the Kennedy Report, after the chairperson of the Committee, Justice Eileen Kennedy), the Committee highlighted the importance of enacting a new Children’s Bill, preventing

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\(^{18}\) Tuairim means opinion in Irish.
family breakdown and utilising state care of children only when there was no alternative. It recommended that services in the community be provided to families to support them in their functioning and with the range of problems they encounter. In particular, it highlighted certain support mechanisms for parents such as local community centres which could “be used to accommodate courses which would help parents to cope with family matters” (Committee on Reformatory and Industrial Schools, 1970, p.37). More specifically, the report states that “where parents, for one reason or another, are unable to cope with their responsibility, early identification and intensive support of such families will often solve the difficulties and prevent complete break-up of the family” (Committee on Reformatory and Industrial Schools, 1970, p. 63). It is not unreasonable to suggest that, given the time and context in which it was written, the report’s recommendations for a “full family support system” including home help and nursery services for mothers who are “willing to work,” (Committee on Reformatory and Industrial Schools, 1970, p. 64) were radical.

One of the recommendations of the Committee’s report was that all aspects of child care should be transferred to the Department of Health, a move which occurred in 1974 as part of a broader reorganisation of the country’s health services (Task Force on Child Care Services, 1980, p. 52). On foot of the appointment of a new Minister for Health, a review of the Child Care services was ordered in 1974 and was finalised in 1980. In addition to recommending legislative reform, it highlighted the central role for society in supporting families, and suggested that social policy “should begin with families - parents who are bringing up families and couples who

19 While a change of government contributed to the delay in finalising the report, the main factor was disagreement between some members of the Committee on aspects of its recommendations. Two members felt that certain issues such as adoption, basic social services, constitutional rights of children, the juvenile justice system and the administration of the child care system were not adequately addressed in the main report. These members added a supplementary report to the main report outlining their thinking on these issues. Others had reservations about the juvenile justice system or recommendations about particular institutions or policies (Task Force on Child Care Services, 1980, pp. 279-426).
are preparing for their first child. Some families will need extra support” (1980, p. 38-9). Hence, it identified the function of family support services to “help and support parents in providing good care for their children, especially those parents who are experiencing particular difficulties in doing so” (Task Force on Child Care Services, 1980, p. 67).

The report suggested the development and implementation of a comprehensive family support service, which “should not be predetermined on a national basis but [...] be closely linked to the needs of families in particular communities” (Task Force on Child Care Services, 1980, p. 39). These services, including supports to parents on a group and individual basis, should be “within a framework sufficiently flexible to enable services to be adapted and combined to meet the needs of children and families” (Task Force on Child Care Services, 1980, p. 268). The Task Force report envisaged that services could be provided by agencies in both the statutory and voluntary sector, by social work services and by community groups, providing practical supports like home help and, where necessary, “supplementing the care which the children received from their parents and helping the parents to develop their capacity to care for their children” (Task Force on Child Care Services, 1980, p. 68).

Devaney (2011) argues that the contentious nature of debates surrounding the provision of services for children and families in general in Ireland contributed to the delays in development of child care services outlined in the report. Indeed, in addition to a supplemental report expanding on (although generally not disagreeing with) the content of the report, there were four separate sets of reservations published, ranging from recommendations on specific institutions to those on policy orientations. The lack of progress may additionally have had as much to do with the dire economic circumstances of the early 1980s, the political instability which accompanied it, cutbacks in health and social care services, and the lack of political saliency attached to the issue of child and family services compared to other policy areas.
In the absence of any real increase in state provision, the voluntary sector consolidated its position as the primary provider (Richardson, 2005), building on services offered from the early 1970s when a number of community resource centres opened as part of the first programme to combat poverty. One of the central objectives of the programme was to “provide practical interventions in areas of deprivation or among groups of people in need” (Harvey, 1990, p. 8). The ISPCC began establishing family centres in urban areas around the country from 1977 onwards. These family centres provided a range of services, including individual and group work, intensive family work, mothers’ groups and other community development services (Keogh, 1984). Gilligan (1991) outlined the work that these centres and their community workers provided to children, parents and communities, including:

- the promotion of local welfare rights;
- running of adult education courses on community leadership training, personal development for women, assertiveness courses, parenting courses or literacy skills; and
- the development of playgroups, nurseries, play schemes, summer projects, training schemes, youth centres or other local resources and facilities.

In May 1985, the Children (Care and Protection) Bill began its passage in Dáil Éireann, the lower house of the Irish Parliament. Introducing the Bill, the then Minister for Health noted the recommendations contained in both the Task Force and Kennedy reports about the need to move away from institutional care. The Bill contained a section empowering health boards to provide family support services to give effect to this, although the Minister noted his intention to “maintain the emphasis on assisting voluntary initiatives, in providing this much needed family support” (Desmond, 1985). More generally, the Minister outlined the aim of the bill:

There are thousands of other children, not at risk in any way, whose parents require support and assistance in looking after them. In
most cases the support needed extends only to the provision of, say, chıldminding facilities while parents are at work. In other cases, children and their parents require intensive social wo\textsuperscript{rk} support on a continuing basis. All of these children and their families will benefit from the provisions of this Bill (Desmond, 1985).

The Bill proceeded to Committee Stage in 1986 but lapsed with the dissolution of Parliament and the calling of a general election in 1987. The new Government introduced a new Child Care Bill in 1988 instead of reinstating the 1985 Bill due to the numerous amendments proposed to it and Supreme Court doubts on the constitutionality of particular sections (O’Hanlon, 1988)\textsuperscript{20}. It would be another three years before the Child Care Bill became the Child Care Act 1991.

\textbf{4.4.2. 1990 to present}

The passing of the Child Care Act 1991 has been described as a “watershed moment” in Irish child care policy (Richardson, 2005). The Act remains the primary piece of legislation governing services for children and families. It places a statutory obligation on health boards to promote the welfare of children who are not receiving adequate care and attention, and strengthens the power of health boards to provide child care and family support services (Curry, 2011). However, the Act itself is brief in this regard. Section 3 (3) states that it shall be a function of a health board to “provide child care and family support services, and may provide and maintain premises and make such other provision as it considers necessary or desirable for such purposes” (Government of Ireland, 1991).

Implementation of the Act was incremental and was quickened only by three high profile child abuse cases and their inquiry reports. In particular, the report into the Kilkenny Incest Case\textsuperscript{21} (McGuinness, 1993) recommended that adequate resources be provided to fully implement the Act; that the Constitution be changed to include a statement on the rights of children; and that funding for family support services be increased and

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Doubts regarding the ability of health boards to place children in care and the granting of custody rights to foster parents.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} As referred to in the introduction of this thesis, the Kilkenny Incest Case involved the abuse of a girl by her father, including sexual abuse resulting in her giving birth to his child.
\end{itemize}
}
services expanded, particularly in the context of “parenting being an onerous task” (McGuinness, 1993, p.111). In response to the recommendations of the report, and the public outcry regarding more child abuse cases, the Government provided £35 million for services in 1993 (Ferguson 1994). However, this and the implementation of the Act tended to be influenced by a more child protection focus than a family support one (Pinkerton, Dolan and Percy, 2003; Millar, 2006).

As previously noted, the 1990s heralded a new direction in family policy in Ireland. The State ratified the UNCRC in 1992. Of note in the Convention was the importance of parents’ roles in helping and supporting children to realise their rights, as embodied in Article 18 (2) of the Convention which states that:

> for the purpose of guaranteeing and promoting the rights set forth in the present Convention, States Parties shall render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities.

In 1995, the Commission on the Family was established, charged with, among other things, addressing the lack of coherence in family policy and bringing clarity of objectives to it “so that the valid role of the State in promoting family life […] can be more effective” (Commission on the Family, 1998, p. 7). In its comprehensive report, Strengthening Families for Life, the Commission made a number of suggestions regarding the future course of policy for the newly established Department of Social, Family and Community Affairs. These included that the State learn from experience on the ground in the form of the family and community resource centres providing family support services in developing preventative policies and strategies “for all families facing the ordinary challenges of day to day living” (Commission on the Family, 1998, p.16). As part of this, the Commission called for a comprehensive, strengths-based, developmental and universally available programme supporting positive parenting to be a core feature of family policy, involving both the provision of information
and the implementation of parenting programmes. The Commission also recommended that a national coordinating group be established to oversee these developments and that the Departments of Health, Education, and Social, Community and Family Affairs, along with local agencies and health boards, take the lead in this work.

In making its recommendations regarding parenting supports, the Commission recognised that much work was already occurring on the ground, particularly within the voluntary sector. Ryland’s (1995) study of parenting programmes in Ireland surveyed both facilitators and parents regarding the need for such programmes, and the extent of their provision. Of the 86 parents interviewed for the study, 39.2% identified the lack of support/isolation as the main issue, followed by 22.6% who identified that parenting was not a natural skill. Based on a sample of 280 facilitators, Ryland discovered that over 400 parenting courses (not different programmes) had been provided in a 12 month period. While she stressed the limitations of her study, she concluded that what emerges from the research “is of a dynamic ‘grassroots’ level social phenomenon which has developed as a response to parents’ need for support in the parenting role” (Ryland, 1995, p.60). A follow-up study by French (1998) revealed that the number of parenting programmes provided had increased substantially on 1995’s figures. French concluded that “the establishment of a national policy would allow for the coordination of resources, the development of appropriate materials, the training of facilitators and the promotion of parenting programmes” (1998, p.185).

The publication of Strengthening Families for Life marked the beginning of a particularly fertile period for family support in Ireland. In the same year the Government launched Springboard, a series of family support projects located in disadvantaged communities. In 1999, it published Children First,

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22 The terms of reference were added to in 1996 when a Government Minister asked the Commission to examine the potential of parenting programmes as a mechanism to support families (Commission on the Family, 1998).
the National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, which contained a chapter on the importance of family support. These guidelines were, however, not placed on a statutory footing.

In 2000, the National Children’s Strategy *Our Children – Their Lives* was published. The Strategy spoke of the need to support parents so that children can achieve their full potential. However, it tended to document initiatives already underway alongside a small number of proposed ones. Specifically regarding supporting parents, the main initiatives outlined were the provision of more child care places to facilitate employment, the provision of information through websites such as Scoilnet, and the extension of parenting programmes, on a universal and targeted basis (2000, p.75). Such commitments comprised a relatively small part of the overall Strategy, and signified little by way of change from what had gone before in relation to the provision of family and parenting support.

In 2001, the Family Support Agency Act was passed and the Family Support Agency was established in 2003. The Act outlined the functions of the Agency to: provide a family mediation service; to promote marriage counselling and family support services; to support and promote the development of the family and community resource centre programme; and to finance bodies delivering services within the agency’s remit (Millar, 2006). Of particular note here was the continued support for the family resource centres (FRCs). The aim of the FRC programme is to help combat disadvantage by supporting the functioning of the family unit (DSFA, 2008). Ten of these were established initially in 1994 by the then Department of Social Welfare on a pilot basis. Following an evaluation of their work, mainstream funding was provided for the original ten and subsequent FRCs (McKeown, 2013).

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23 Scoilnet is an Irish website operated by the Department of Education and Skills which aims to provide parents with a range of information about schools and the curricula at primary and secondary level.
Currently, there are 106 FRCs with two additional outreach services. Each FRC operates autonomously and responds to the needs identified in its local community. The Department of Social and Family Affairs also initiated the Family Services Project in 1999, where one-stop shops were established in local social welfare offices with the aim of providing information on a range of family services and support operated locally, including marriage counselling and preparation, parenting, childcare and mediation (Ahern, 1999). These services were subsumed into local employment offices in the mid-2000s as part of services for the unemployed.

In addition to those outlined above, other Government departments and their agencies were also, at this stage, funding what were described as family support services. The Department of Education provided a number of programmes, such as Early Start, a preschool programme and the Home-School-Community Liaison Service. The Department of Justice was a prominent funder of childcare services in the early 21st century, although this had more to do with labour market concerns than the well-being of families (McKeown, Clarke and Little, 2004). It also provided funding for youth diversion projects run by juvenile liaison officers in An Garda Síochána, Ireland’s Police Force, which had the aim of diverting young people who had come to their attention away from crime.

By the mid-2000s it was clear that there was significant provision of family and parenting support services in Ireland. McKeown and Haase (2004) undertook a census of family support services funded by the regional health boards. Their definition of general family support services included the following:24

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24 McKeown and Haase (2004) examined provision of general family support services and child care family support services, the latter defined as services which promote child development but which may also facilitate parental employment, including parent and toddler services, pre-school services and nurseries. These child care services are not included in the figures extracted from their analysis. In addition, they also purposively excluded social workers and public health nurses as the family support element of their
• family support projects and services;
• family support services with a residential aspect;
• day foster care;
• respite care;
• parent support and education programmes such as the community mothers programme and teen parent projects;
• family support workers in health boards;
• family welfare conferencing;
• family support services for asylum seekers;
• family support services for travellers;
• traveller health initiatives;
• domestic violence services;
• home management advisory services;
• springboard projects;
• after-school and out-of-school services;
• community child care workers in health boards;
• youth services such as neighbourhood youth projects, mentoring programmes and the youth advocacy programmes;
• services for young people misusing drugs;
• teenage health initiatives; and
• community development projects.

Their analysis of the census results provides an interesting insight into the nature, extent and operation of family support services in Ireland. They found that the majority of services were family support projects and services (28%), followed by youth services (10%), domestic violence work could not be satisfactorily isolated from other ‘core’ work which they did. Disability and mental health services were excluded for administrative reasons. Family support services which were not funded at all by the health boards were excluded. However, it is likely that some of these were captured given the variety of funding sources which are available to the main providers of the services, namely voluntary and community sector organisations.

25 The figures presented here are for general family support services. They do not include childcare family support services. The overall response rate for the census was 56%, but was 68% when general family support services were taken on their own.
services (8%), parent support and education programmes (7%), community development projects (7%), health board family support workers (6%) and health board child care workers (5%) (McKeown and Haase, 2004, p.12).

Amongst other findings outlined above, it is clear that family support services had grown significantly in the previous ten years. Despite such service developments, however, Millar (2006) argued that there was still “little policy agreement as to what actually constitutes ‘family support’ in Ireland” (2006, p. 91). Although internationally recognised experts on family support had prepared a policy paper for the Department of Health and Children (DOHC) (Pinkerton, Dolan and Canavan, 2004), and closely advised on the *Agenda for Children Services: A Policy Handbook* (OMC, 2007), no nationally agreed definition of what constitutes family support policy has yet emerged from the State. While there is greater clarity around what constitutes family support practice (Dolan, Canavan and Pinkerton, 2006; Devaney, 2011), it is by no means definitive. In some quarters it still suffers from the impression of being “warm and fuzzy” (Canavan, Dolan and Pinkerton, 2000) and as something which is ambiguous. Devaney’s (2011) research findings from work with Irish practitioners and Irish and international pioneers of family support are notable in this regard.

It is also discernible that, both with the *Agenda for Children’s Services* and other Government-sponsored publications in the 2000s, there is a particular emphasis on practice as opposed to policy (Canavan, 2010). In addition to McKeown and Haase, (2004) and McKeown, Clarke and Little (2004), Brady, Dolan and Canavan (2004) were commissioned by the then Department of Health and Children to produce a report exploring good practices in working with children and families. While the *Agenda for Children’s Services* spoke of being an active policy tool, encouraging reflective practice amongst all stakeholders, the main thrust of the document was about the orientation of services and the attainment of outcomes for children. As Canavan notes (2010, p.25):
It remains the case that Family Support is often thought about as relevant to services and frontline practices. In this sense, a wider view of Family Support, where it ranges across all policies, services and practices [...] is far from being realised.

It has been argued that, in the face of increasing regulation and policy guidance in the area of child protection given repeated scandals of the 1990s and early 2000s, a focus on family support has suffered. This has resulted in a policy vacuum in which family support services have operated, and a perception that they are the poor relation of the State’s response to the needs of children and families whose needs and risks levels are not as high as others (McKeown, Clarke and Little, 2004, pp.56-58). This difference between child protection and family support is underpinned by Ferguson and O’Reilly (2001), who note that while there is clarity within monitoring and notification systems for child protection concerns, the same is not the case for more general child welfare cases where family support services may be an option. The absence of a family support policy has resulted in “no clear objectives to determine what such services might achieve” (McKeown, Clarke and Little, 2004, p.54).  

4.4.3. The organisation of health sector family support services in the 2000s
McKeown, Clarke and Little (2004) describe the organisational and functional layout of statutory services for children and families which, despite agency changes, was still the layout when this study began. Functionally, services for children and families are broadly split into three groups: child protection; children in care; and family support services. Organisationally, these services are arranged based on the structures of the health services generally (i.e. regional and local administrative

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26 As highlighted in a footnote above, since this research was undertaken a new child and family agency, Tusla, has been established. In 2014, it published a parenting support strategy. We should also recall the commitments recently made in the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People to support parents. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs is also finalising a draft of the first Family and Parenting Support Policy Statement.

27 This is still the layout today, although with the advance of Tusla, some merging of operations has occurred (for example, the merging of community care areas which were broadly along county lines).
structures). After that, there is some differentiation regarding roles and responsibilities:

- In each regional health area, there is usually a director or senior coordinator for child and family services. Below this, some health boards appointed separate managers for family support services and for residential or alternative care;

- At the community care area level (or after 2005 what became known as the Local Health Office level), principal social workers are usually responsible for the three aspects of services for children and families. However, Child Care Managers also exist, whose role varies in and between different regional areas: some are responsible for all services instead of the principal social workers, while others are responsible for service development, or for overseeing child protection referrals and cases. The establishment of these positions arose from the inquiry report in 1996 into the death of a child known to social services, Kelly Fitzgerald. The position was created in each local health office in recognition of the “need for direction and leadership in the planning and delivery of services at local level [...] to effectively discharge the functions of child welfare and protection” (The Inquiry Team, 2010, p.16).

Pinkerton, Dolan and Canavan (2004) noted that in the then 10 years that statutory family support services had been pursued, health boards had produced their own accounts of developments at the regional and local level. However, in these accounts it was made “clear that what is required from policy is a working definition of family support, a perspective on children and families’ needs, an indication of range type and level of intervention, and a set of practice principles. All of these elements need to be combined in a timetabled development plan that has clear objectives” (Pinkerton, Dolan and Canavan, 2004, p.8-9).
In 2009, the Health Service Executive commissioned a strategic review of its services for children and families. The resulting report echoed those points above, that roles and responsibilities across the services were unclear, with significant variations in delivery across the country. It found that the absence of any national strategy or policy in relation to child protection, and more broadly child and family services and how they were to be implemented consistently, resulted in local variation and thus uneven implementation (PA Consulting, 2009).

McKeown and Haase’s (2004) census of family support services revealed that the regional health boards were responsible for the direct sole delivery of approximately 26% of family support services. A further 8.5% were delivered jointly by health boards and voluntary and community sector organisations, with the remainder being provided by the voluntary and community sectors alone (56%), private organisations and others. Health boards provided 57% of all funding for family support services, although the authors noted that there was significant variation between health boards regarding the apportioning of funding to services, as well as provision. The western and southern health boards had higher levels of provision than the midlands or eastern areas.

4.5. Conclusion
A number of things are apparent from this review of Irish family and family support policy and service provision. Firstly, it is clear that there has been much activity in the family policy field since the 1990s. Despite this, however, it remains implicit, spread across a number of different policy areas, lacking coordination and explicit policy assertion. Secondly, when particular policy initiatives relating to the family are examined in the context of the Fox-Harding models, it is clear that they stray across many of the models. However, for this study, when one particular element of family policy is examined – services for children and families – it is apparent that the model most relevant is substituting and supporting
families. Thirdly, in line with other areas of Irish social policy, the community and voluntary sector has played a crucial role in the provision of family support services. In the absence of any explicit family policy, services emerged to fill the vacuum and meet local needs. While the Church was the central player, other providers also existed and came to dominate in the 1970s. Although state services have since expanded, they have done so in tandem with the community and voluntary sector.

Fourthly, from the mid-20th century, there have been calls for the reform of child care law and services for families. In particular, in suggesting the development of family support-orientated services, many calls have highlighted the importance of supporting parents. Yet in keeping with the nature of family policy, no explicit policy statement has emerged on supporting families and/or specifically supporting parents despite the repetitive focus. Instead, family support practices continued to be funded at a local level, and indeed expanded, but without an overarching vision or set of goals. This has especially been the case with family and parenting support initiatives, which have expanded greatly in the 1990s. While lessons from practice have been drawn and compiled, none have made the leap to inform a specific policy statement on family and parenting support – yet. But why has this been a neglected area of policy?

It is perhaps down to a number of factors. Up until relatively recently, conservatism within the political sphere and Irish society have impeded the making of an explicit policy statement on and for all families in Ireland. Due to the political, social and cultural power of the Church, the family was a no-go area in the main, a private space. In this sense, the constitutional legacy remained powerful for quite some time (Rush, 2006), as did the principle of subsidiarity (Fahey and Russell, 2011, cited in Browne, 2005). A second factor is related to the conservatism mentioned: a lack of political will and prioritising. The history of Irish family policy is pockmarked by delays. However, given its political and economic history, it is arguable that the laissez-faire attitude epitomised by the State towards the family
suited a polity occupied with other, more politically salient issues at different times, such as the economy and related problems like unemployment (on more than one occasion) and the internecine war in Northern Ireland. Additionally, other divisive moral issues such as divorce and – also on several occasions – abortion may have reduced any appetite for further forays into the family policy arena. The delays in bringing forward and implementing the Child Care Act 1991 can be seen, in the view of Gilligan (2009), as a sign of the ‘reluctant’ Irish State when it came to policy and provision for children and families, especially for public children, those whose private world becomes public business due to concerns about their care and safety. He cites Skehill (2005, p.196) who identified a general disinterest by the State from the early 20th century in child and family matters (cited in Gilligan, 2009, p.287). While policy initiatives, regulations and guidelines for children at risk of coming into the care of the State may have been developed in the 1990s and 2000s, it is clear that they are absent for the broader needs of children and families where the risks are not (yet) as acute.

A third factor is the role of the voluntary and community sector. As with other aspects of Irish social policy, the sector developed an expertise in meeting the needs of children and families, particularly in the 1970s when religious orders were stepping back from service provision and the service orientation thus moved towards community provision (Curry, 2011). The role of the community and voluntary sector has served to almost excuse the State from providing family and parenting support services to a degree (Richardson, 2005). While this has been addressed in recent years with the development of child care services in the health boards, service development has been sporadic and incremental. The absence of any coherent national framework for the development of services has permitted local variation and delivery of child and family services.

The last years of the 20th century did witness some activity in relation to one area of family policy – children. This was largely in response to
scandals regarding the care of children in the family home in the mid to late 1990s, combined with a number of exposés of recent historical abuse of children and other vulnerable groups in religious and State care. Yet, while there has been policy innovation in the 2000s, there have also been signs of a continuance of such reluctance. The Children’s Rights Referendum, eventually held in November 2012, was first posited by Government in 2006. While the wording of the proposed amendment was agreed by a parliamentary committee in 2007, it was replaced in 2010 by the then Minister for Children – but not published. Although the amendment passed, the Irish Constitution is still to be amended as the vote is subject to a pending Supreme Court appeal (McGing, 2014). However, it should also be noted that despite the referendum being held on a Saturday, a move seen to facilitate voting amongst the general public, the turnout was 33.5%, one of the lowest referendum turnouts in Irish political history. Only the turnouts for referenda on university representation to the Seanad (both held on the same day in 1979, 28.6%), and the reform of bail laws (1996, 29.2%) were lower. It would appear, from this at least, that despite public outcries about child abuse scandals, there is a certain reluctance amongst the Irish population as there is amongst the Irish political and administrative classes for reforming aspects of family policy.

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28 In Ireland, since a Supreme Court ruling in 1995 known as the McKenna Judgement, public funds cannot be used to favour one side over another in a referendum. For the Children’s Rights Referendum, though, the Government produced its own literature promoting a yes vote. This, ultimately, is the subject of the appeal as it is viewed by the appellant to have illegally influenced the result.

29 The Seanad is the Irish Senate, the upper chamber of Parliament.
Chapter Five: A local approach to family and parenting support: Mol an Óige

5.1. Introduction

As we have seen, the policy environment in which children and family services in Ireland operate lacks specificity and clarity. In addition, the organisation of child and family services permits local decision making about much of what families receive by way of formal support, and thus results in variation from county to county. This chapter outlines the outputs of these characteristics: the Mol an Óige approach to family and parenting support. It presents interview data contextualising the development of the approach before introducing the content of it and its process. Finally, case file data is presented from 225 closed cases to provide an insight into the nature of the work with families that workers strive to do, and some of the characteristics of that work.

5.2. Child and family services in Mayo and Roscommon

In Mayo, child and family services are organised as follows. The social work service is organised into three groups, one in each of the towns of Castlebar, Swinford and Ballina. Each team has a social work team leader, social workers, family support workers, child care workers and leaders. Additionally, there are other staff involved, including a Children First team leader, a Children First information officer, four psychologists, three public health nurses, a senior medical officer, two principal social workers and a child care manager. Additionally, the HSE in Mayo directly provides a range of other services for or related to children and families, including family welfare conferencing, pre-school inspections, early childcare services, psychology and home management/home help services.

Relating to the range of family support services in place, the HSE in both counties works in partnership with a variety of community and voluntary organisations to provide a range of services aimed at different groups in the catchment area. In Mayo the range of activities involves providing part
funding and other supports for numerous services, which in turn provide family support services, including: Foróige Neighbourhood Youth Projects (NYPs)\textsuperscript{30}, local community development projects\textsuperscript{31}, the Family Centre\textsuperscript{32}, the Mayo Women’s Support Service\textsuperscript{33}, Mayo Rape Crisis Centre\textsuperscript{34}, and the ISPCC.

In Roscommon the social work service is also spread over three locations – Boyle, Castlerea and Roscommon Town. A range of staff play a role in the provision of child protection, fostering, adoption, family support and children in care services. These are a child care manager, a principal social worker, three social work team leaders, a children’s act services manager, nine social workers, five fostering resource workers, seven family support workers, an adoption worker, a family welfare conference co-ordinator, and four community childcare leaders. These staff are supported by a number of psychologists, public health nurses, and medical officers. It also funds a range of other organisations that provide family support services, such as, Foróige community development projects and family centres.

5.3. The Boys Town approach to family and parenting support
Mol an Óige is an approach to working with parents and children which is based on the Boys Town In-Home Family Service (Ingram et al., 2013; Peterson et al., 1995). The In-Home Family Service forms part of the Boys

\textsuperscript{30} Foróige NYPs provide support for young people between ten and 18 years of age who may be facing personal, family, social or educational difficulties. They operate an open-door policy and thus any young person within the above age range can avail of its services. The families of young people identified by staff as requiring additional supports may be offered family and parenting support.

\textsuperscript{31} Community development projects work to counter poverty and exclusion through supporting and empowering communities to achieve change. The 1990s witnessed an exponential growth of community development projects, from 15 to over 100 in the 2000s. They owe their origins to the cooperative movement of the 1930s and community social service organisations of the 1960s (Combat Poverty Agency, 2000).

\textsuperscript{32} The Family Centre provides counselling and bereavement support services for families at both an individual and group level.

\textsuperscript{33} Part of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Mayo Women’s Support Service provides support to women and children who are victims of domestic violence.

\textsuperscript{34} The Rape Crisis Centre provides services and support to, amongst others, victims of domestic violence.
Town continuum of services and features close to the prevention end, just above broad-based community support services and universal supports, such as the free-phone parenting hotline, various media resources and the group-based Common Sense Parenting Programme. The continuum is outlined in Figure 9 below, with those shaded in blue representing family-orientated programmes while those in yellow represent interventions for individuals:

![Figure 9: Boys Town continuum of care]

Source: Boys Town (n.d.)

5.2.1. Content
The emphasis of the model is on building skills that can then be applied across a range of settings. Some of the key elements of the model as it operates in the United States include (Peterson et al., 1995):

1. Teaching skills – helping people learn new ways of thinking and interacting through the teaching of skills. Workers impart this knowledge through particular teaching skills, such as proactive teaching (e.g. anticipating situations before they arise) and corrective teaching (when children are not behaving), as well as particular techniques, such as role modelling;

2. Building healthy relationships – workers are encouraged to build positive relationships with families, and vice versa;
3. Supporting moral and spiritual development – families are encouraged to develop their spiritual lives;
4. Creating a positive family style environment – the family unit is viewed as the best context for the positive and healthy development of children; and

As interventions are not just limited to the family domain, the worker may also be expected to forge relationships and co-operate with other actors in the family’s ecology. These include children’s peer networks, schools and sources of formal and informal support in the community.

5.2.2. The role of workers

Family workers (in Boys Town language, ‘family consultants’) play a key role as teachers, coaches, and partners and are viewed as catalysts in the process of change. The worker often helps to teach new behaviours and to build functional life skills. This involves constantly assessing the family’s identified needs, strengths and agendas. The teaching element involves teaching parents or other adults new behaviours and skills, teaching children skills and behaviours and teaching adults how to teach the children in their care. Whilst there is an emphasis on teaching, partnership is also emphasised between worker and family, with the importance of trust being central to any support provided.

The role of the worker is intense. They are expected to be available to their families 24 hours a day, and provide up to 20 hours per week support to each family. Support is envisaged to be relatively short, between six and eight weeks (Peterson et al., 1995). However, recent research on the American experience has indicated that this is not the case. Ingram et al., (2013) highlight that the average length of support provided was 15 weeks, with a range of between 1.5 weeks and 105 weeks.
5.2.3. Process and oversight
The process involved in delivering the in-home family service is divided up into three areas (Ingram et al., 2013). The first involves relationship building and the undertaking of service and social support assessments. These feed into the development of a family plan, where goals of the work are outlined. The second phase centres on teaching and modelling by the family worker of skills and strategies, as well as broader work to support the family (Peterson et al., 1995). The final phase involves the slow withdrawal of the worker and support for the family as progress is assessed. This process is overseen by a highly structured supervision process, involving data monitoring, observations of staff, and regular face-to-face meetings.

5.4. Local experimentation in the west of Ireland: the development of Mol an Óige
Interview data reveal that a number of factors prompted the development and implementation of Mol an Óige in Mayo and Roscommon. First was the initial contact made by Boys Town executive staff with the Child and Family services in Roscommon in 2001 while visiting Ireland. Following from this initial contact, informal inquiries were made by the Child Care Manager regarding the content and operation of the services. A general familiarity with the services it offered and its principles of working was developed. Following from this, the second factor was the need in 2006 to place a child requiring high support intervention in the Boys Town campus in the United States. On accompanying the child to Nebraska, the child care manager witnessed the services in operation. The third factor was a sense of dissatisfaction with service organisation and outcomes amongst a number of child care managers in the region who would meet informally to discuss

35 While this may appear a random meeting it was not. The founder of Boys Town, Fr. Edward Flanagan, was from Ballymoe, Co. Roscommon and the visiting personnel sought out the child and family services in the county. Interviews with the child care manager and Boys Town staff revealed the importance of the Irish-American connection at the top of the Boys Town organisation.
issues pertaining to their work, particularly in relation to children and families requiring high support. As one child care manager put it:

Basically frustration. There was a sense that we weren’t coordinating things, we weren’t doing things properly even though we had loads of money, we had very good staff, we just weren’t, for a small cohort of very difficult kids, we weren’t able to provide that level of care. We weren’t all that happy about the high support special care sort of route either, just seemed to take kids further away and there seemed to be no tie up between what we were trying to do and that [model of care] (CCM 1).

In addition to this frustration, there was also frustration about the lack of delivery at a national level, particularly around the integration of services. This programme was an opportunity to respond locally to this vacuum at national level:

[Staff] should be sceptical. There’s been so many promises by the HSE for integrated services, for this, for that, you know. Forget this integration between services, like if I can send out, if I go to [a service] and that case is allocated to any one of those workers I know exactly what will happen [...]I know the parents and kids will get a great bloody service and I know the managers who brought it (CCM 1).

A joint committee between the two counties was established to examine the feasibility of implementing the Boys Town approach, led by the two child care managers. As the work of the Committee progressed, it was agreed to examine the potential of models to address the different level of needs of local families engaging with services. However, it was clear that given the role and power of the child care managers, the Boys Town approach was the only approach under realistic consideration:

[The other child care manager] and I put the Boys Town on the table and we virtually said [to the others on the committee] “well look, unless you can come up with anything better, you know”. It wasn’t quite a democratic decision but if people were very passionate about something else as we were about Boystown I would hope we would have considered it fairly. To be fair to them they weren’t in a position to do that because I mean [The other child care manager] and I at that stage had probably been thinking
about Boys Town for two years you know. So that was basically that (CCM 1).

It was decided between the child care managers of both counties that two elements of the Boys Town suite would be imported for use: the in-home family preservation service; and the treatment foster care programme. Collectively, these became known as Mol an Óige (meaning ‘praise the youth’ in Irish). At a later point, a third element was added: the ‘common sense parenting’ programme. In particular, the in-home element was decided upon because it was perceived to suit the work being undertaken by family support teams in both counties. Its focus on working with families from a strengths-based and preventative basis also closely aligned with a family support perspective. In supporting implementation, the child care managers sent 14 staff on an initial two week visit to Boys Town in November 2007 to become familiar with the programme and train up in it. This was accompanied by five training and implementation support visits to Ireland by Boys Town staff between 2007 and 2010.

5.5. How Mol an Óige operates in Mayo and Roscommon

Mol an Óige is best characterised as a three phased process, with the boundaries between each phase being fluid and overlapping.

Initiating Mol an Óige

Families can be referred by professionals or can self-refer into services operating Mol an Óige.\(^{36}\) While some families are referred as part of a child protection plan, engagement more generally by families is on voluntary basis. Once a referral occurs and has been deemed appropriate, family workers meet with family members to discuss issues prevalent in their lives which they require support with, and seek their agreement to begin implementing the approach. They may also meet with other professionals involved with the family. If families wish to continue, further

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\(^{36}\) Not all services in this study permit self-referral. Some services only take referrals from social work. In addition, referrals to particular services are first considered by in-house referral committees.
visits are arranged in the family home to build relationships and begin the assessment process. Assessment can occur over the course of these first meetings and involves the use of formal assessment tools and practice knowledge to identify strengths existing in the family home and other domains. This period is also used to identify a particular need which can be met immediately, known as a quick-and-early. Further exploration of issues between the family worker and family members occurs, which leads to the preliminary identification of goals or outcomes for the proposed work. These outcomes are incorporated into a family or service plan alongside referrer concerns, with particular roles, activities and expectations of all involved aligned to each outcome. Building relationships, identifying issues through exploration and assessment, and the development of the family plan are central to this part of the work. The use of family worker skills begins immediately.

**Implementing the Family Plan**

Work on implementing the family plan begins. This involves work in the family home with the parent (and where appropriate, the young person). A key part of this work is the teaching of particular parenting skills by family workers to parents to address the goals set out in the plan. Workers and parents/young people continue to work together to develop these skills through a range of techniques. If relevant, workers also work with young people in other settings to address particular needs or issues. The emphasis on ecology is important. Workers try and link with other services in the community dependent on the goals of the family plan, and in many cases seek to work in different settings. Family plans are reassessed regularly to identify progress and to incorporate new goals if and when they emerge. Generally, the aim of this part of the work is to build skills in families and provide a range of supports to enable them to deal with issues independent of support into the future.
**Phasing Out**

As goals are achieved, and parents report confidence in using skills, family workers begin a process of phasing out their support for families. This involves a reduction of direct in-home support to families, but can involve visits to reaffirm skills or reassure parents of their abilities to address issues which arise, as well as ongoing telephone contact as and when required. Linking families to other supports or activities is a part of this aspect of the work. Accessing such supports or activities is, as with other aspects of the model, ultimately up to the family. Assessment occurs again at the end of the intervention, with a final meeting bringing the work to a close.

**Supervision**

As per the original American approach, staff supervision is a central aspect of Mol an Óige. While the term supervision is used, there are three distinct aspects to it:

- observations of practice – while they do not occur at every visit, observations of staff by supervisors are aimed at ensuring effective implementation. Supervisors maintain a low profile and do not provide any direct intervention or support. Feedback from observations is provided directly to staff afterwards;

- staff supervision - staff supervision occurs regularly and is linked to case work. In supervision meetings, elements of relationship building, teaching, service planning, all feature, along with monitoring of progress; and

- file Audit – often occurring within supervision as well, a dedicated piece of work on randomly auditing a case worker’s file is undertaken to ensure that service planning, note taking and associated documentation is completed in line with the model and is up-to-date.
5.5.1. Mayo and Roscommon children and family services implementing Mol an Óige

Mol an Óige is operated by six services across the counties of Mayo and Roscommon. Outlined below are details of each of the services (see Figure 10 below). In Roscommon the approach is used in three services:

- the Family Support Service – a community-based family support service operating out of one site and providing a range of supports to families. It is, in principle, open to all;
- Social Work child care workers - members of the child care team attached to social work offices across the county provide family support to children and parents in cases open to the social work department;
- Foróige Neighbourhood Youth Projects (NYPs) – community-based youth development and family support services working for young people between the ages of ten and 18, and their families. They operate an open-door policy and thus any young person between the ages of ten and 18 can avail of its services. The families of young people identified by staff as requiring additional supports may be offered family and parenting support.

In Mayo the model is operated in three services:

- the Family Support Service – a community-based family support service providing to families. It operates from four different sites around the county and is available to anyone who wishes to avail of it;
- Sli Nua\(^\text{37}\) – attached to the social work department, Sli Nua is a family support service aimed specifically at supporting parents to keep their child(ren) at home or preparing parents for the return of a child(ren). It also provides foster care parenting support. The service is offered throughout the county; and

\(^{37}\) Sli Nua means ‘new way’ in Irish.
• the Edge Project – a community-based response to the support needs of young people aged ten to 17 who have come to the attention of the juvenile justice system and/or whose behaviour poses a risk to their safety, health, development and welfare. It operates throughout the county.

The three services in Mayo are supported by a dedicated psychologist for the model. The Edge and Sli Nua have referral and consultative access to a psychologist, while the community-based family support services has consultative access.

Figure 10: The organisational context of Mol an Óige in Mayo and Roscommon

Denotes full access to psychology support
Denotes consultation access to psychology support (no referrals).
5.6. **Data from case file analysis**

The following section presents data from those families who received support from a worker using Mol an Óige. Over the course of the study, data from 273 Mol an Óige cases were received. As outlined in chapter three, these data were gathered by way of a template which staff completed and forwarded to me. Of these 273 cases, 48 were ongoing at the time of analysis and were thus excluded. What is presented below is based on analysis of 225 closed cases.

5.6.1. **Length of support**

Across all closed cases, the mean length of support provided was 8.3 months and the standard deviation was 5.1 months. The median length of support was 7 months, while the mode was also 7 months. The minimum length of intervention was less than 2 weeks, and the maximum length was 30 months.

5.6.2. **Goals across closed cases**

In total, there were 634 goals identified in the 225 closed cases. The average number of goals per case was 2.81, however there was a wide distribution of numbers of goals per cases. This distribution is presented in Figure 11 below (note in eight cases goals were not specified, hence 217 as total under ‘one goal’).
All cases here had at least one goal; 176 cases had two goals or more; 134 cases had three goals or more and so on. Note here that 41 cases only had one goal. 83% of all goals were accounted for by cases which had between one and three goals.

Figure 12 below shows the total closed case distribution of goals across categories:

As can be seen, specific aspects of parenting support account for 177 goals, or 28% of all goals. Behaviour (of child(ren)) accounted for 155 goals, or
24%. There is a notable drop off then to the next highest category of goal, relating to school, at 10%.

5.6.3. Assessment in all closed cases
Across all closed cases, there was evidence of assessment prior to work beginning in 171 instances (76%). Thus, there were 54 cases where there was no assessment undertaken. When these cases are examined, the following reasons were provided (Figure 13 below):

Of the nine cases deemed to have disengaged, all were deemed to have disengaged immediately after opening (e.g. ‘disengaged after service began’) or moved away. In relation to the transition through the work to post intervention assessment, of the 171 cases pre-work assessments undertaken, 88 of these had no assessment once support finished, although 50 of these 88 cases were deemed to have closed successfully (see below).

This data is notable because, while assessment is a requirement of workers in the Mol an Óige approach, assessment is a potential site for the exercise of discretion in street-level behaviour across a range of social services (Ellis, Davis and Rummery, 1999). There is a sizable number of cases (n=24, 44%) where reasons are not given for pre-work assessment being done. More notable, perhaps, is the number of cases cited above where no follow-up assessment was undertaken, although they were deemed to have closed
successfully. While it is not possible to be definitive about this, these figures suggest some lack of understanding about implementation requirements, or potential shirking of responsibilities.

5.6.4. Case success
Each worker was asked to indicate whether, in their opinion, each case closed successfully or not. Out of 225 cases, 132 (59%) were deemed to have closed successfully, while 91 (40%) were deemed to have closed unsuccessfully. In two cases (1%), no judgement was made.

Across the 132 successful cases, 188 parents and 132 young people were worked with. The average length of intervention was 8.8 months and the standard deviation was 4.62 months. The median was eight months and the mode was also eight months. The minimum length of intervention was two months and the maximum was 30 months.

5.6.5. Goal attainment in successful cases
Examining the cases which were deemed to have closed successfully, the following distribution of goal achievement was identified (see Figure 14 below).

\[\text{38 Goals from the two cases which were not judged successful or unsuccessful are included here.}\]
As can be seen in the graph, where cases were deemed to have closed successfully, the number of goals not achieved is quite low. Also, the single highest category of goal achieved is parenting, followed by behaviour, followed by school. Together, these account for 67% of all goals achieved in successful cases. Accessing services was also notable, along with family relationship goals, and others, all accounting for 22% of all goals achieved in successful cases.

5.6.6. Unsuccessful cases
Across the 91 unsuccessful cases, 111 parents and 64 young people were worked with. The average length of time support was provided for was 7.5 months, with a standard deviation of 5.6 months. The median length of time support was provided for was six months, and the mode was seven months. The minimum length of intervention was less than two weeks and the maximum length of intervention was 2 years and three months.

The following graph shows the level of goal attainment in unsuccessful cases (Figure 15):
As the graph depicts, the overwhelming majority of goals in unsuccessful cases were not achieved. 28% of cases deemed unsuccessful were open to social work, while another 46% were from the Edge service, working with parent(s) and young people where the young person has come into contact with the youth justice system.

The following reasons were outlined in the various files for the categorisation by the service of each these cases as unsuccessful (Figure 16):
Of note here is the variety of reasons provided for cases being deemed unsuccessful. When the ‘disengaged’ category is removed, the single largest categories are ‘goals not achieved’ (15%) and ‘families moved away’ (8%). ‘Service transfer’ and ‘other’ (e.g. maternity leave) account for another 11% together. Of the 14 cases which were deemed not to have achieved their goals, half had the goal of returning a child home (i.e. they were open to social work family support services). In these cases, children remained in care. Other prominent goals amongst this group included ten parenting goals, six behaviour goals and three criminal behaviour goals.

When the 51 cases deemed ‘disengaged’ are examined more closely, a number of things are notable. The first thing to note is the average length of intervention: 6.5 months. The minimum length of intervention was 0.5 months and the maximum was 21 months. When examined qualitatively, there is great variety in the disengaged cases. For example, 14 cases were classified disengaged because the young person or parent was deemed to have explicitly refused to engage, while in another 12 cases parents were supported and worked with to varying degrees but ultimately were classified as disengaged; all these had the central goal of returning a child home or keeping a child at home (again, they were open to social work family support services). Other singular reasons identified included a young person voluntarily entering care, another being placed on remand,
one parent disengaging due to feeling the programme had not worked, and another disengaging due to the feeling the programme had worked. One family simply ‘withdrew’.

5.7. Conclusion

This chapter has presented three sets of data for the study. Firstly, it has provided limited, but important interview data from local decision makers regarding their ability (power and resources) to introduce new approaches to ‘doing’ family and parenting support. The underlying influence for the introduction of Mol an Óige was a dissatisfaction with the way support had been provided up to that point, especially where needs were particularly acute. However, that Mol an Óige was also used as an approach for meeting less severe needs of parents and families is also indicative of local power and decision making. Secondly, the chapter has outlined the immediate service context for Mol an Óige and outlined the process of the approach. Thirdly, it has presented data from case file analysis, highlighting the nature of the goals which guided this family and parenting support work, as well as other characteristics of service provision, such as length of service provided, and the extent to which assessments were completed or not. We now turn to examine how the first three factors of the Jewell and Glaser framework which serve to shape what these workers do when supporting parents and families.
Chapter Six: Street-level behaviour and organisational factors

6.1. Introduction

The Jewell and Glaser (2006) framework seeks to provide the researcher with a scaffold with which to analyse the mediating role of organisational factors in the implementation of policy. The data presented in this chapter addresses the question: what is the relationship between street-level bureaucratic behaviour and organisational factors when supporting parents? The elements of the framework relating to ‘organisational factors’ are: role expectation; knowledge and expertise; and incentives. In answering the question, consideration needs to be given to what each factor actually means or ‘looks like’ in relation to street-level work in the Jewell and Glaser framework, and elsewhere in street-level research.

The chapter is broken down into three sections. Section 6.2 examines role expectations of street-level workers when implementing parenting support through Mol an Óige. As outlined in the framework, examining this factor involves identifying workers’ perceptions of their own roles as well as the role of the broader policy within which they work. Evidence from the literature review suggests that workers who view the policy positively will implement it more successfully. Section 6.3 examines the impact of knowledge and expertise on street-level behaviour. Examining how a range of organisational and personal resources are brought to bear on the implementation process is an important consideration for street-level research. The traditional street-level perspective assumes that workers and organisations are resource-limited, which affects the policy output received by clients. Section 6.4 examines the factor incentive. Central to this is the identification of the motivations for street-level work and the rewards and sanctions which can affect their behaviour. Each section begins with a brief recap of the definition of the factor under consideration before qualitative and quantitative data is presented in the context of existing literature.
6.2. Role expectation and street-level work

For Jewell and Glaser, *Role Expectation* is specifically defined as “how the mission and values of a programme, as they are communicated to staff, become embodied in the worker’s perceptions of and attitudes towards their work and their clients” (2006, p. 341). As outlined in chapter two, Jewell and Glaser found a range of role expectations amongst workers, some of which aligned with the goal of client employment, and some which did not. Some workers were characterised as generalists while others were characterised as specialists. The system in which they worked tended to produce such characterisations through new limits to welfare entitlements: workers tended to focus on the goal of client employment out of concern for worker’s financial situations.

Lipsky (1980) identified that street-level workers enter public service with a sense of a vocation, but their role expectations are socially constructed through their engagement with peers, supervisors, other professionals, and through broader expectations of society, but not their clients. The range of influences on the role expectation of Lipsky’s street-level bureaucrat leads to role ambiguity; often contradictory expectations create space for the worker to carve out what it is they view as important to do (Lipsky, 1980, pp.45-48). This sense of conflicting expectations is also found in the state-agent/citizen-agent narrative of Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003), where workers display characteristics of both typical street-level bureaucrats and more citizen-orientated workers. Hagan (1987) found similar variation amongst workers in the administration of income maintenance, as did van Berkel, van der Aa and van Gestel (2010), in their application of the Jewell and Glaser framework who detected three types of role: bureaucratic, entrepreneurial, and care-orientated. More recent scholarship on the street-level implementation of policies has identified how workers perceive themselves in implementing a programme or policy as being a strong predictor of the successful implementation of that programme at the street level.
More recent research has also found a link between the perceptions of a policy or programme held by a worker and their tendency to implement it. May and Winter (2009) found, in particular, that a worker’s understanding of how a programme fitted with their understanding of a particular policy domain or sector, and their professional role within it, tended to affect implementation positively. Extensive quantitative work by Tummers (2011) and colleagues (Tummers, Stein and Bekkers, 2012) also identified the role of professionals’ perceptions of a policy (creating a benefit to their work and to their clients) as having a small but positive impact on their willingness to implement a programme faithfully.

6.2.1. Street-level workers’ perceptions of the policy they implement
In this study, almost all participants identified the Mol an Óige approach specifically as a family support way of working. This was spoken of in very positive terms, with it being described as “a good fit” with family support principles, in particular in meeting the needs of families in a community setting. Particular aspects of a family support approach (Pinkerton, Dolan and Canavan, 2004; Dolan, Canavan and Pinkerton, 2006) were identified by participants when talking about the approach. Chief amongst these was the perspective that it was an empowering approach for families when working with them. The term partnership featured in many accounts, with the approach’s element of developing service or family plans with parents, and young people where relevant, cited as an influential factor in their positive assessment of it. Other workers used a variety of terms to describe why they characterised it as family support, such as: it being needs-led; comprehensive; voluntary; family-led; rights-based; and linking families with their social network and sources of social support. That the work was directed by the identified needs and issues of the family, alongside referral reasons, was critical to this. Many workers identified that it had a strong, community-based perspective, which was a preferred way of working with children and families. The sense of the worker and
their organisation engaging with families who voluntarily desired support was a particularly striking finding in the data. For example:

To me it ticks all of them [the boxes]. Like it’s the working in partnership, it’s needs led, it focuses on the wishes, the feelings [of the family] [...] It focuses on building strengths and resilience as well, using networks that are there, the social networks that are in a community. Like we’ve always done that but we’re more mindful of doing it now with the Mol an Óige. (SP 3)

Other participants spoke of specific policy documents and the approach’s relevance to them. The *Agenda for Children’s Services* was remarked upon by a small number of workers, in particular its emphasis on outcomes for children. More generally, participants spoke of specific elements of family support, such as legislation. For example:

Well first of all in terms of the legislative context I think if you look at the Childcare Act 1991 which incorporates provision for the delivery of family support, preventative way, I think Mol an Óige delivers, ticks all the boxes for that. [...] In terms of the broader policy context, like if you go back to the Commission on the Family, I think it was in 1998 or if you go back to the Children Strategy [...] is a clear focus on supporting the family in any way, shape or form that’s possible because that’s regarded as the place to bring up children, it’s the best place to bring them up and I think the Mol an Óige [...] does that. (SP 5)

All workers also spoke very clearly about their need to be cognisant of child protection legislation and the need to be aware of the any particular issues which may arise in the course of their work and report them to the relevant authorities. A number of workers spoke of the need to be accountable to the *Children First* guidelines irrespective of what is going on in the family home.

At the level of practice, workers positively perceived Mol an Óige as offering an improved framework or way of doing family support, of implementing it. For example:

Yeah I suppose I have found it very positive overall that it certainly is family support. I suppose family support to me is empowering the family or enabling the family to use their own resources and networks to be able to live comfortably and without too much
stress and family support offers that. I suppose the Mol an Óige has given me the framework to have structure on that for which there was no structure. (SL 18)

It was perceived by the overwhelming majority of workers to enhance their work with families. One main reason was cited for this: the structured process which it gave workers to undertake work with parents and families and do family support. The staged process by which they engaged with families, taught skills and provided support, and observed skill use independently by parents with their children was central to this perception. The family service plan, the assessments, and the supervision and observation, all contributed to a positive way of working for workers. Accountability was a key theme which emerged in workers’ views on the process. The notion of having all your work mapped out for supervisors to review was very common. As SL 17 commented:

For me the biggest impact is putting a structure on what we do, seeing the differences, seeing the family service plan on paper. You look back after six months or a year working with the family, you see it’s all mapped. (SL 17)

However, other positive effects were highlighted for the working process. Wasting resources was a common thread throughout findings. The tendency for workers, in a small number of instances, to work with families with little sense of achievement or progress previous to its implementation was cited as a key factor here. The opportunity Mol an Óige provided for workers to save resources was viewed positively: For example:

Some families have gone into foster care because [Mol an Óige] has been there, has seen the woods from the trees very quickly, that things are not going to change. (SL 5)

Findings from Tummers et al (2012) and Tummers (2011) highlight the role perception of programme or policy effectiveness for clients can have on the implementation process. In both sets of findings, programmes which were deemed to negatively affect clients in particular ways experienced implementation problems, largely through bureaucrats’ unwillingness to implement them because of these perceptions. In this study, workers were
extremely positive about the potential for Mol an Óige to deliver for clients, to enhance their well-being, and ultimately, to make them independent. This was despite the fact that in a number of cases it did not work for families. Workers viewed it not only as a positive way of working with families, but as a positive instrument for families to work for themselves and achieve their own goals. All workers drew on their own experiences of seeing change for families as justification of their positive assessments of it and their willingness to implement it. For example:

I feel it works really well because I think it focuses the family on what goals they can achieve, and they can actually see progress [...] when they make little changes it gives them a great boost of confidence. [...] The family support plan, they can see it is achievable, it clearly outlines how they can get to where they want to get, and what support they’re going to get from us. It increases their confidence and they become empowered to make those changes. (SL 20)

Mol an Óige thus was not viewed as disturbing the overall policy paradigm within which both the supervisors and workers operated previously. This point was underpinned by quantitative data on agency goals. While less than half of the respondents (45%) felt that their agency had a clear focus on its goal pre Mol an Óige, this rose to 73% after its implementation (see Figure 17 below). A Mann-Whitney U test revealed no statistically significant difference in scores between baseline (Md = 3, n = 22) and follow up (Md = 4, n = 22), U = 163, z = -1.944, p = .052, r = .29. However, it is notable here that the change was positive, and such change approached statistical significance at p = .05.
Figure 17: Baseline and follow-up scores on agency having a clear focus on its goal

This data suggests that workers’ perception of what they were implementing, i.e. family and parenting support through Mol an Óige, enhanced their perceptions of the agency having a clearer focus on its goal than before. Meyers and Vorsanger (2003) argue that the implementation of new programmes is only likely to succeed when they are matched to the overall organisational ethos of the agencies required to implement them. Lin (2000, cited in Meyers and Vorsanger, 2003) furthermore argues that when policies are implemented in conflict to the goals of the agency and the intentions of those who introduced them, it is because workers are trying to make sense of the new policies within their existing frames of reference. They do not see the new programme as fitting with what they see themselves doing. When considering the data presented here, it is clear that Mol an Óige does not seek to deviate from the existing form of family support dominant amongst workers perceptions of what they do.

6.2.2. Workers’ perceptions of their role

Street-level implementation literature has highlighted a range of roles which workers perceive themselves as having in implementing a programme and the tendency for workers to adopt various roles throughout the implementation process. In the application of their framework, Jewell and Glaser highlight that that role perceptions tended to
be very narrowly and technically conceived, with workers not trained to work beyond the assessment process to engage clients in discussions about employment. Van Berkel, van der Aa and van Gestel (2010), and Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2000; 2003), highlight that workers often deviate from a purely bureaucratic implementation role in seeking to meet the needs of clients. They can engage in activities which bend or entirely go beyond the specific confines or regulatory requirements of the programme to meet the needs of clients as they present to the service, and thus act in a more citizen (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2000) or care orientated way (van Berkel, 2010). However, as Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003) highlight, the two constructs are not dichotomous; they are not all or nothing scenarios, but rather can aid in the analysis of street-level activities and roles.

**Citizen-agent characteristics of Mol an Óíge workers**

In talking about their roles, workers tended to define themselves in relation to the clients they worked with, rather than simply being bureaucratic implementers of a policy. Central to the majority of their engagements with clients was the view that the parents they worked with were in need of support, were “at the end of their tether” with their family situations, and needed help. Understandably, workers’ views of clients dominated accounts of their work. Many parents were described as being tired of the impact a child’s behaviour was having on family life, and wanting it to change. Issues of confidence around parenting practice and self-esteem of parents generally tended to characterise these descriptions, with workers perceiving that, in many family homes parents had lost control and did not have the confidence to deal with issues as they may have had in the past.

Mol an Óíge requires workers to engage with parents to a far greater degree than they had done previously. As such, the majority of workers all recognised the import of working with parents in supporting families. For example:
Well I think we do a lot more parent support than before, yeah. Ok, so if you were to break down our family support into a pie chart, the biggest block of it would be solely parent support, working with parents, I’d say three quarters of it. I never thought of it like that though. But when I go into a house I head for the parents, my head is always heading for the parents. (SL 2)

However, workers were also conscious of the challenges which face families today, particularly in tough economic times. The potential for additional stresses on the wider ecology of parenting to arise in these situations was apparent, and workers were aware of the need to address these pressures for parents:

Supporting them [parents] in issues that they may be facing, so it mightn’t be just around their young people or their children. But kind of outside of that, like we know with some of the families here it could be around housing or money or that kind of thing so it’s about supporting them outside of just your strict Mol an Óige, your family support, [.....]. We see parents and they’re so stressed out and they have problems obviously with their young people and that’s why we’re there, but it might be something that they’re very stressed out about that can be alleviated just by talking to Housing [department in the local authority] or MABS [the money, advice and budgeting service] or someone like that, that can alleviate an awful lot of stress. (SL 2)

When a case was opened, workers were required to meet with a client(s) in their home and talk with them about their particular issues which brought them into contact with the service. This was often characterised by workers as an opportunity to establish a rapport with clients and begin the process of developing a relationship with them. While this was technically a requirement of the approach, a bureaucratic rule, workers emphasised the importance of providing emotional support to clients, in particular through providing a listening ear for parents to vent about their situation, and the difficulties which they were experiencing. Providing them with comfort and reassurance were particular characteristics of this support. Workers spoke about the importance of establishing a relationship with clients, of building a rapport with them so as to develop trust and make the engagement process easier. In this regard, workers spoke of the need to
meet families on their level, going beyond the requirements of the programme and bringing a bit of themselves and their own experiences to the process. For example:

Some people [workers] are very concealed about that and they don’t like to cross that border and I always find there’s a certain amount, not an awful lot, but a certain amount of sharing that kind of, I don’t know, adds to people being a little bit more open with each other and so if I’m willing to say. “I have two small kids and they drive me cracked too” or sometimes you might feel uncomfortable saying that to them and you might come with something different do you know? [...] So there’s some element of that and I think it’s conducive to sharing together and that maybe helps with the openness. (SL 22)

In many ways, responding to clients’ individual needs in a discretionary manner was a function of the job as a family support worker generally, and not viewed as an explicit part of the Mol an Óige approach. Hence, the individual workload of each case was determined by the family’s goals. This sense of being client-orientated was best epitomised in the different days and times which workers tended to meet with families, which was generally identified by the families. However, it was also revealed in the range of tasks which workers were willing to do for clients. While more data on this will be presented under the workload factor in the next chapter, the following quote reveals the extent to which some workers went to in helping their clients:

I’ve been chastised about it, but I have helped several parents move home [...] it was a single parent, didn’t have the money to get a removal van, used the back of my car, “come on we’ll do it ourselves”. Practical help because it was a stress, had to be out of the house by Friday. What am I going to do? “I’ll let you work that out?” She didn’t ask, I offered [...] What have I done as a worker? So I’ve helped people move, I don’t know if that’s ‘in my job’ [makes quotations sign with hands] or not but that’s a practical support, a concrete support, I do it. (SL 3)

Workers also viewed themselves as advocates for their clients. In particular, this involved engaging with other professionals on behalf of clients. Many workers reported that clients felt intimidated by other
professionals in their lives. While this was often perceived to be due to clients’ low self-esteem, it was also interpreted as being down to negative experiences in the past when engaging with these professionals. In this regard, workers drew on contacts they had within their immediate professional network to support clients, or accompanied them to appointments with professionals such as doctors and teachers. Workers reported that in some cases they also challenged other professionals regarding how families were to be engaged with. Teachers and school principals were examples cited in particular.

However, in these citizen-agent accounts, moral judgements did feature to a small extent. Parents were constructed as doing the right thing in taking responsibility for their children, as wanting to do something about their behaviour, and being themselves willing to change their parenting practices. In this regard, workers spoke of parents approaching services requiring their child to be fixed without seeing their own role in the issue. Equally other parents who were not engaging were constructed as not taking responsibility. Confronting parents about their responsibilities and their behaviours in facilitating their child’s deteriorating behaviour tended to dominate these descriptions and was seen as a central role of workers. Engendering a shift in parental attitudes about their role in the engagement was a part of such confrontation. However, this did not always happen:

But I think if the lack of interest and the “oh no, it’s gone too far” or “it’s not my problem, it’s not me that needs to change” that’s where you’re coming up with difficulties then [...]. it doesn’t always work. (SL 2)

This moral reasoning featured even more prominently in workers’ accounts of engaging with families open to social work. While there was a perception that workers could negotiate relationships with families because they were not social workers, this was not always the case, and did not always mean that families engaged meaningfully with them. They needed to confront parents about their lack of responsibility featured more
prominently in accounts of families referred from social work. The sense of parents needing to take responsibility for their children, as a normative position, was common in accounts of both supervisors and workers. For example:

Where they’re saying “we don’t need to learn anything”, we’re going “well you do because you lost your child in the first place”. So there is that (SP 7).

In other accounts, there was a sense that some parents lost focus on the role of being a parent, particularly in relation to boundaries and expectations of themselves and their children:

Like the Celtic Tiger has had a huge effect, we’ll say in two different ways. People losing jobs so young people are not getting what they were used to getting, and then you also have where parents find it very hard to say no to young people, and they now have to say no [... and the kids are like “what are you talking about? No? What’s that?” I think that’s a huge thing that young people don’t know the meaning of “no” and parents lost the run of themselves in a lot of ways, you know, where they wanted to be their children’s best friend, and that doesn’t work. [...] So I do think these things have all affected behaviour and I think parents are slowly seeing now that “oh God, I can’t cope with this.” (SL 10)

**State-agent characteristics of Mol an Óige workers**

Mol an Óige contained a number of rules and regulations to be applied by workers. In doing so, workers tended to adopt a state-agent perspective. All were cognisant of the policy context in which they worked, particularly the emphasis on child protection and the need to continually assess the family home regarding the safety and welfare of children in it. Other state-agent or bureaucratic behaviour was evident in the implementation process. Attempts to engage parents through the provision of a quick-and-early were required, often to engender good relations and help build trust. The main role for workers in implementing Mol an Óige was that of teacher and the imparting of advice support in the form of skills and knowledge. While it assumed parents to be passive at the start of the engagement, it required them to become quickly active in its implementation through taking on particular skills in parenting their children in a manner which
workers modelled for them in the home. This was viewed as a central part of family support, as key to these workers’ understanding of it:

I think in the cases that we would work with, 90%, even 95% of the issues are parents’ issues and the parents don’t realise that when they tell me to come in. When we go into a family first they’re used to maybe social workers, other workers and they don’t ask them so much to do the work. Whereas we go in and we say to them “you’re going to have to do 50% of the work and the young person is going to have to do 50% of the work and actually you’re probably going to have to do more than 50% of the work”. (SL 12)

This sense of parents having to become increasingly active had a reinforcing effect on the bureaucratic, state-agent role of the worker.

While many reported wanting to help families in any which way they could, they also recognised that to be truly family-support orientated, they had to maintain a certain distance from the family and resist the temptation to continue doing everything for the family all the time. They did, however, provide esteem support in the form of feedback on the use of such skills when the worker was in the home. Supervisors were also very conscious of this potential to cross a role boundary, and supplement the role of parents in the family rather than support them in their role:

As a supervisor you are looking that it’s not always the worker who is doing this and taking over. A worker might see that as being supportive, they will go and talk to [the doctor], they will go and talk to [the teacher], and they will go and do this, that’s fine. But it’s not always supportive. Again you come back to empowering. “Now I’ll come with you to the teacher.” I’d be looking for those things. (SP 3)

I was involved a good bit with the school and it was keeping the child at school [was the goal], and I would have gone to one or two medical appointments and I would have contacted medical professionals as well, and that, for the mother. But no, because that’s taking over the parenting role and I’m only meant to be there for a short period of time, I’m not going to take over the role, it’s about empowering and enabling them to do their job. So I had to catch myself. (SL 30)

While workers generally spoke of their role in meeting the needs of families, Mol an Óige was deemed to be not suitable for a number of categories of client. Prominent amongst these were families who simply
did not engage. While file analysis outlined in chapter five revealed that workers spent a lot of time trying to engage families for whom it was deemed not a success (on average, 6.5 months), the lack of engagement was ultimately viewed as an unwillingness on the family’s part, rather than any absence of availability on the worker’s behalf. Other categories of family were also deemed not appropriate for further or any engagement. These included families where parents had learning difficulties or low IQs, of families where young people in particular were deemed to be ‘too far gone’. Workers tended to interpret the approach as not meeting these families’ needs, and thus did not engage further with them. In all these cases however, workers were not free to make this decision themselves, but had to consult with supervisors before withdrawing the service.

6.2.3. Factor summary
Jewell and Glaser (2006) posit that analysing role expectation can inform the researcher about how policies are implemented. The data presented here suggests that the implementation of Mol an Óige is heavily tied to the workers’ perceptions of their role as family support workers. They view it as fitting with their policy frame of reference – family support – while also providing them with an improved way of doing family support. It has provided them with a process which permits them to adhere more strongly to the principle of the minimum amount of intervention necessary in family lives to meet need. The positive assessments by workers of Mol an Óige would appear to support findings elsewhere that workers perceptions of policies can influence strongly whether such policies get implemented (Cohen, 1990, cited in Hill (2003); Lin, 2000).

The traditional notion of the street-level bureaucrat espoused by Lipsky (1980), or state-agent put forward by Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003), is apparent in the role descriptions and perceptions of workers in the Mol an Óige approach. However, this is not the street-level bureaucrat pressured by excessive caseloads and work, who seeks to take short cuts with cases or process cases quickly while being seen to adhere to the rules
and regulations. Instead, these are workers who, while adopting citizen-agent characteristics as well, maintain a degree of control over their behaviour so as to not supplant the role of parents. In adhering to their altruistic desires to meet the needs of clients as clients define them, workers will go beyond the confines of the approach. However, to be truly family-support orientated, these workers are required to respect the boundary between worker and family. They are required to support families, and to support parents and parenting specifically, but in doing so are required to maintain a traditional, bureaucratic state-agent role which implementation requires, rather than a citizen-agent role. They can provide various types of support to parents in their parenting role, but in implementing it they cannot do the parenting for parents.

The relationship between street-level bureaucratic behaviour and role expectation is a tense one. To meet the needs of parents in a fully empowering, family support orientated way is to ultimately exert restraint over their altruistic desires to meet all their needs. Supporting parenting through Mol an Óige means exactly that to these workers – supporting. This does not equate with supplanting. While not aware of it as a practice or policy concept, all workers spoke of their role in supporting parents, both within the rigid bureaucratic requirements of the structure, and through the exercise of their discretion as citizen-agents. This factor alone provides evidence of workers trying to work a broader ecology of parenting and providing different types of support.

6.3. The role of incentives in street-level work

The factor incentives involves “the formal and informal system of rewards and sanctions that affect how workers take different courses of action” (Jewell and Glaser, 2006, p. 341). Analysing the role of both formal and informal rewards and sanctions, is, they argue, important in trying to determine street-level influence on policy implementation. In their case study, Jewell and Glaser found that an absence of rewards for workers in
broaching the issue of employment with clients meant it tended not to happen. In addition, the time required for such conversations, the uncomfortable nature of the interaction, and resulting paperwork which would have resulted from them, acted as disincentive to promote client employment. All this was accompanied by formal sanction at the organisational level for not completing paperwork properly. If the conversation about client employment did not happen, there was no need for paperwork, hence no risk of being sanctioned for incomplete paperwork.

Lipsky (1980) stated that where performance management frameworks exist, workers will seek to mimic them, at least at a superficial level, to avoid sanction. More generally, discretion will impact on the worker’s personal reward and incentive structure. Workers will cream clients so as to avoid more challenging ones (which is considered a sanction if taken) and through progressing easier clients to a close will receive an intrinsic reward of job well done. Workers can receive rewards and sanctions from supervisors through making work more or less interesting for them, a point reinforced by Harr (2000) and Engel (2002). They can also receive rewards in the form of validation from their peers or other professionals, although Halliday et al. (2009) found such validation difficult to access for workers. More generally, given the nature of the sector, extrinsic rewards and sanctions, such as work-related bonuses or being fired, are absent.

Nielsen’s (2006) work challenges the Lipskian notion and suggests that workers engage in practices because of a range of motivations, including economic, social and self-fulfilling. Workers are incentivised to cope with the pressure of the job through remuneration, through job satisfaction, and through social interaction with their clients.
6.3.1. Presence, absence and role of rewards

6.3.1.1. Nature of the sector and absence of formal rewards
In this study, all respondents highlighted pay as the main agency reward for undertaking their work. Beyond this, there was some degree of variation in participants’ responses regarding the presence of agency rewards for their work and the role such rewards play in them undertaking particular courses of action. There was broad agreement across all participants – street-level workers and supervisors – that there was an absence of formal agency rewards for good work done. The main reason for this was perceived to be the nature of the sector generally, and the impact of reduced budgets on the organisations more recently. Numerous workers commented about the absence of such a motivation from their thinking when training for this type of work in college, or entering their profession. This is very much in line with Lipsky’s views on the nature of the sector and the absence of a reward structure. In his call for a renewal of public service provision, he suggested that the financial rewards and career opportunities for street-level workers needed to be similar to that received by comparable workers in the private sector (1980, p. 205). Despite the absence of such commensurate remuneration in their work, however, workers in this study did not feel that it impacted on their work with parents, it was simply a characteristic of the sector. Instead, they drew their rewards from other areas of their work.

6.3.1.2. Supervision
Nielsen (2006) argues that the motivation of a worker can be understood through the effects of both positive and negative pressures on a number of factors which structures behaviour. In her structuring of “social man” at the street-level, she views interaction with supervisors as potentially affecting workers’ tendency and motivation to work. In their studies on police officers, Harr (2000) and Engel (2002; 2003) discovered that positive relationships with supervisors increased police officers’ motivation to work and their overall job satisfaction. Central to this was the role of
supervisors in providing support in implementing community policing programmes, and more generally, in offering problem-solving strategies (cited in Wang, 2006).

Many workers highlighted the overall supervision process they received as providing a positive impetus to their work. While supervision played a role regarding the extent of their discretion, it also played a role in how workers perceived the agency judging their work. Work with parents being acknowledged in a formal way by superiors and line managers was deemed to add significantly to a worker’s own perception of their work and increased their sense of self-worth in undertaking what were often judged to be difficult cases. For many, this acted as an incentive to progress implementation with other families, and reinvigorated their work in cases which were proving particularly difficult. It also featured as a conscious aspect of the responses from some supervisors. The following two quotes highlight the worker and supervisor perspective on the role of formal praise and acknowledgement in the implementation process:

But I think that the Mol an Óige does help in that, with observation [and] supervision, you are getting feedback on your work, it is in relation to a family, you are still getting some kind of affirmation [...] and I think that impacts you because you’d have a great sense of “you’ve done something, keep going.” (SL 11)

I suppose I would be conscious of trying to give the encouragement and acknowledge the work that they do by using praise wherever I can and just acknowledging “that was really tough and you got through that”, just simple things to acknowledge and motivate. So just to show that I see it. (SP 1)

Survey data reinforces this point (see Figure 18 below). Comparison of baseline and follow-up scores on the feedback process in supervision highlights the increased positive light in which it is held. While 59% (n = 13) agreed or strongly agreed that they received regular feedback on their work through supervision, 82% (n = 18) held similar views at follow-up. A Mann-Whitney U test revealed that the change between baseline (Md = 4, n = 22) and follow-up (Md = 4, n = 22) was statistically significant, U = 145, z
While this data could suggest that the feedback was negative as well as positive, interview data indicates the broadly positive light which supervision is held in by workers.

![Figure 18: Baseline and follow-up scores on supervision feedback](image)

Others participants highlighted that the supervision process worked in different ways to incentivise their work. In a small number of cases, supervisors engaged in the training of workers so they could “act-up” and take on supervisory duties with less experienced case workers and, in doing so cover annual leave or other forms of supervisory absence in the implementation process. While the supervisor was less convinced that such a process could be viewed exclusively as a reward, one worker identified the potential fillip in such an opportunity as an acknowledgement of good work. The contribution to professional development of such a move was viewed as a positive thing and specifically as a reward by some. As these quotes outline:

[Some workers] have been trained up as supervisors and occasionally I would ask them to act up in my absence but I don’t know, is that a reward? [laughs]. It could be a disincentive, couldn’t it? [laughs]. (SP 5)

Reward wise for work, we get avenues. Supervision training [...] I was trained up in that, now there is a limited amount of opportunities to use it, which I suppose would be nicer [...]. It’s something different to keep you interested, I suppose that’s a little reward. (SL 22)
However, all were not of the view that supervision was a process which rendered the formal reward of acknowledgement for their work. One worker, in particular, spoke of the absence of a formal commendation aspect in the supervision experience, which instead tended to be characterised by a focus on process, rather than any meaningful engagement with the worker about cases and the nature of the work, and arriving at an evaluative judgement on the work for the worker. For example:

I mean we’re suggesting for parents to do things like praise, I mean that’s what supervision is about. It’s about being praised and saying “you know you’ve done this, well done”. And it motivates you then to do more like, to do better. [...] but I suppose my problem with supervision is that I don’t think there’s enough praise given for the work that you do [...] obviously you’ve done something right, but sometimes you feel like “Jesus, how much more do I have to tell you for you to say “you’ve done well there”” It would be like “oh right, ok, that’s going good, we’ll move on.” (SL 10)

It should be noted that this type of view was very much in the minority. While Lipsky argued that supervisors and workers were bound up in a reciprocal but mainly conflictual relationship, where supervisors could bequeath particular rewards to workers for particular types of behaviour, the rewards provided here did not necessarily conform to this type of exchange. While the provision of informal training was viewed as a potential disincentive by the supervisor, the workers were of a different view.

These findings converge with those of Brewer (2005), who found that frontline supervisors can play an important role in a number of areas, including the positive motivation of individual workers to undertake their work towards the achievement of programme goals. Brehm and Gates (1997) in their study of street-level leadership, found that the perspective of supervisor as public service principal adopting solely a formal, oversight role in the supervisory process was insufficient to capture the realities of social work supervision. Instead, they found that supervisors played a role
as mission advocates and trust builders (see also Brehm and Gates, 2003). The data presented here (and elsewhere in this study under authority) suggests that workers see it as a very positive form of engagement with their superiors, akin to Evans (2011) on the supervisor-worker relationship in the UK, and not as conflictual as Lipsky’s analysis characterises it.

6.3.1.3. Challenging cases and different work
Many workers and supervisors highlighted the nature of the type of case worked with as a reward. Differences regarding this issue were apparent in the responses from participants, but the general tone of them revealed a position amongst staff of interpreting the assigning of more difficult cases as a reward for good practice with parents and families; of implementing the programme well. In particular, cases with complex family histories, involving attachment and other issues, were viewed as particularly challenging. In these situations, workers reported positively about being assigned such families as an acknowledgement of their skills and as a reward for their work. This was common in the findings. For example:

I think there are cases that are picked because of the type of person that you are and because of your ability to manage under certain stresses. Is that a reward? Probably yes. It is an acknowledgement of your professional practice, your ability to do a good job. Now, you’re going in thinking “Jesus, why am I in the thick of this, do I really need this?” but yeah, you sit back and go, “there was a reason for me being handed over this case”. (SL 9)

Responses from supervisors revealed reward was factor, amongst other reasons. Thought was given to the suitability of a worker to a particular case, geography, capacity, experience, and the desire for workers to have a particular type of case, of regarding a case as “something to get their teeth into” (SP 2). However, supervisors monitored caseloads regularly. The requirement that caseload be reduced and workload in each case increase provided an additional incentive for workers, in that they realised that they were not going to be overburdened with cases. This is important to consider in the face of seeing more difficult cases as potential incentives or disincentives.
Lipsky (1980) highlighted that managers could make work more or less interesting for street-level bureaucrats, however this was in the context of pressure on workloads. More difficult cases in the context of high caseloads could reasonably be suggested as taking the form of a sanction, or of a punishment. However, with the strict control of caseload size in Mol an Óige, more challenging cases were seen mainly as more difficult cases. Nielsen (2006) argues that workers can engage in programme implementation due to the self-fulfilling nature of the work involved. Drawing on theories of human relations in constructing “self-fulfilling man”, she posits that workers will engage positively with a programme if it challenges them in particular ways.

Supervisors also reported that they took actions to prevent burnout of workers after particularly difficult cases had concluded, and that a balance was required in maintaining appetite for the work amongst workers while also protecting them from being involved continually in difficult cases. Workers also reported this, highlighting that being required to do less intensive, group parenting work from time to time equated to a break from the intense, individual work, and which also provides its own rewards. As SL 4 highlighted:

> It’s a nicer kind of vibe [parenting programmes] and it’s a nice little break away from that intensity. I look forward to doing those now. And the feedback is always really positive and good because it’s quite immediate. Again, your with parents that are coming in like “just give us some information, give us something” and they’re coming back the next week after going “oh my god, that was fantastic”. (SL 4)

Survey data tends to somewhat counter the general view held by supervisors that they take action to reduce burnout (see Figure 19). Although more workers strongly agreed that supervisors took such action post Mol an Óige than prior to its introduction, more workers were also ambivalent to the statement. A Mann-Whitney U test revealed no statistically significant difference between baseline (Md = 3.5, n = 22) and follow-up (Md = 3, n = 21), U = 180.5, z = -1.284, p = .199, r = .2.
6.3.1.4. Perceptions of family outcomes and success
Lipsky’s notion of altruism in case work (1980, p.144) is an important consideration of motivation. While some workers may “retire on the job”, the majority are more focused on the goal of meeting clients’ needs as best they can. In his theory, he states that, while clients do not comprise the worker’s reference group, praise is still an important resource clients can give to a worker. Changes of behaviour and expressions of gratitude are important drivers for street-level workers, which serve to structure worker-client interaction. Jewell and Glaser (2006) simply account that job satisfaction may be one type of incentive which explains street-level behaviour towards the achievement of programme goals. Nielsen (2006) highlights that in certain situations, street-level bureaucrats move beyond the traditional Lipskian position of coping with caseload to actually enjoying their work, which services as a positive motivation to them in conducting their work.

The nature of formal acknowledgement from families was valued greatly by workers. Seeing change in families was very much associated with the structure and processes of the approach, and its underpinning philosophies. The emphasis on being able to see change as a result of the work with families, as well as track it through the use of assessment tools,
and case file management, were perceived as positive elements of the approach, which contributed to a greater sense of doing well for families. Seeing such changes was a noted spur to continue the case to the end. While the additional paperwork associated with ongoing engagement with clients could have acted as a disincentive to their work, as a sanction, as it did in Jewell and Glaser’s (2006) study, the vast majority of workers felt that such additional work was warranted in the reward of doing a good job. It is clear that accomplishing goals and seeing changes in families is regarded as a very positive incentive to these workers:

I suppose getting to the end of a family service plan or maybe at the end of the fifth one in some cases and going “ok, I helped them reach one or two goals there and they’re just feeling so better about waking up in the morning”. That’s just a great feeling (SL 26).

This quote is noteworthy for another reason. In developing multiple service plans there could potentially be a disincentive for the worker in the amount of paperwork and administration involved. However, it appeared not to be the case for workers in general. Many reported revising plans with families as new goals arose, or as things changed in families’ lives.

6.3.1.5. Positive perceptions of other professionals
Receiving praise from other parts of the organisation, or other professionals in the field, was viewed as a very strong reward for the work being undertaken. Halliday et al. (2009) found that when social workers engaged with legal professionals in the course of their duties, the workers felt devalued and disregarded due to their perceptions of inferiority when dealing with these professionals. They felt they had little to offer compared to the other professionals. In this study, the instances where professionals from other organisations acknowledged good work done were valued greatly by workers and served to positively motivate them. This was particularly felt where cases were more difficult, typically those open to social work or family welfare conferencing, where the intervention was not necessarily based on purely voluntary engagement. Workers perceived the approach and its implementation with families as offering
credence to their work, giving them a sense of authority in wider engagement with professionals which they felt they did not have before. It affected their own perceptions of how they viewed other professionals perceiving them:

But I think there are rewards outside of here where other agencies see the difference we make as a whole, and each social worker could have a different case, different work. There’s something to be said in that, I think a lot of people [professionals] are talking about Mol an Óige and wanting to get in on it, and are seeing the differences in families. (SL 17)

Survey data reinforced these perceptions held by workers. There was a very notable change in the perceived respect of other professionals to their role (see Figure 20). While 95% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that other disciplines were not respectful of their role at baseline, this fell to 5% at follow-up. While no participant strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement at baseline, 73% did so at follow-up, with a notable 23% being ambivalent on the matter. A Mann-Whitney U test revealed that the change in perception between baseline (Md = 2, n = 22) and follow-up (Md = 4, n = 22) was statistically significant, U = 26.5, z = -5.233, p = .001, r = .78.

Figure 20: Baseline and follow-up scores of perceptions of other disciplines’ respect for role
6.3.2. Presence, absence and role of sanctions

6.3.2.1. Nature of the sector and absence of formal sanctions
Lipsky noted the absence of one significant sanction in the context of street-level work: the difficulty public sector organisations have in dismissing people for poor performance (1980, p.24). Thus, in civil and public sector organisations poor performance prevailed and workers were generally free to engage in behaviours within the limits of the supervisor. Such a scenario plays out in the perceptions of Mol an Óige workers regarding this aspect of their incentive structure. As with the formal rewards in the organisation, the vast majority of participants highlighted a general absence of sanctions for not progressing cases towards a conclusion, or not engaging in necessary work as required. The main reason again held by many was the nature of the sector in which they worked, which tended to require gross misconduct to warrant formal sanctioning. However, there was also a sense that the supervision regime which operated as part of the Mol an Óige approach played a formative role in preventing case-related reasons arising which warranted sanction.

6.3.2.2. Supervision
Workers felt that the processes of Mol an Óige tended to incentivise them to undertake all the required tasks to avoid sanction from their supervisors. The regular supervision sessions, accompanied by observations and file audits, is a departure from the traditional street-level position, where the privileged nature of street-level work tended to make it, for the most part, unobservable. Mol an Óige required workers to have all their files up to date, as well as demonstrate the application of the approach and be able to talk through what was done in each case during supervision. Supervisors’ ability to visit homes and speak independently with families about their experience of the service played into this scenario. Workers were conscious that, while they could steer supervisors towards particular families, the ultimate decision about observation visits remained with the supervisors. An informal work incentive such as not completing all
necessary case work was a particular point mentioned by both workers and supervisors. The chance of randomly having a case file audited was regarded as an incentive to have all case file material up to date and thus avoid sanctioning by supervisors. The quotes below highlight that, while file auditing was important for keeping workers in check, it didn’t always happen, and warranted intervention by the supervisor:

And with file audits you can’t let your case notes slip, these things happen because I mean at certain times if something comes up in a case it’s very easy to go, “haven’t got time to record that”. You have to. I feel like it keeps me in check as a worker. (SL 26)

Say, for example maintaining records or documentation, like it would be about me then telling them to give time to it, to allocate time in the week to it, maybe even take a week off [from direct work] to catch up, get up to date with your administration, that kind of thing. And then about following through say with another audit on it. (SP 1)

Supervision also served to sanction workers in a more informal way. Both workers and supervisors reported that emphasis was placed on family issues being resolved within a timeframe of six to nine months, except in certain circumstances. In this light, workers interpreted the supervision process’ dominant emphasis on case management as a mechanism to maintain focus on that target, and in particular instances push things along towards a conclusion. While workers welcomed the focus on case management, several of them felt that being told to close cases at particular times was against their better judgement. The prevalence of dealing with growing referral lists, as well as fitting in with the needs of other services tended to dominate the comments of supervisors:

Mol an Óige is very time-framed, and there are deadlines; in practice we would tie ourselves into reviews with [other professionals], so we have to be seen to be doing our job. I suppose case conferences, court as well, you can’t be sitting on your laurels. If you are then, you are either not doing your job and the supervision will show that you are not doing your job, or that the family are really stuck. (SP 6)
However, a small number of workers felt that the ability of supervision to act as a mechanism to discuss cases and challenge supervisors about the appropriateness of closing cases to meet the demands of new clients was always possible. Implied in these responses was a sense of control on behalf of the worker to do what they felt was right, for their clients and for their own work:

Referrals, yeah it is a pressure. Now you can take that [close the case instruction] on board, or you can say, “no, I’ll finish when it is appropriate to finish. I’m not going to finish just because you have two referrals on your desk”. (SL 9)

These data somewhat challenge findings in relation to the role of supervision regarding incentives in street-level bureaucracies. Dias and Moody (2007) found that clients are simply processed when the organisational pressures and costs of meaningfully working with them become too much. Similarly, Smith and Donovan (2003) found that workers were encouraged to place children in care rather than work with their families to keep them. The time taken to do the latter incentivised the former. Here, while the pressures to take new cases were apparent in the perspectives of the managers, there was also a sense that workers could challenge them and maintain their work with families according to their own judgement. This resonates with elements of both Nielsen’s (2006) self-fulfilling man and social man. Although there are incentives in engaging with superiors, and sometimes challenging them, there are greater incentives for workers in the role that they play as professionals and the work that they perform for clients.

6.3.2.3. Nature of cases and perception of family outcomes
Cases which simply did not progress, or disimproved, were characterised in some workers’ responses as a form of intrinsic sanction. While supervision played a part in trying to progress cases along, through joint problem solving and specific instruction at times, cases stalling due to what were perceived to be family circumstances were spoken of as a sleight on workers’ perception of their own practice, as a type of informal sanction
which diminished their eagerness for the approach and their work more generally. A number of workers spoke of taking such situations personally. For example, as SL 21 highlighted:

> There is the personal punishment, the self thing, the disappointment in myself if a case didn’t work out. There might have been an issue in the house, and the kids just had to be taken into care, like you would still be disappointed. Oh yeah. (SL 21)

However, there was a small number of situations where workers desired cases to close, or for families to disengage due the difficulties in supporting them. In these cases, workers spoke about being exasperated with families’ lack of willingness to follow through on elements of the approach and undertake tasks as part of it, or more generally, to participate. While such families were deemed to be engaging, and thus would not have the service withdrawn from them, they were deemed to have a lack of enthusiasm or complete motivation for the approach to work. In these situations, workers wanted things to improve but felt it was very difficult to progress the cases any further, with one particular worker reporting being “bored” with such families:

> I always get to a point where I may have worked with a batch of cases for a period of time and I look forward to the change, to new fresh people coming in. (SL 18)

> You get bored with a family [...] you want things to change, to progress for the family. But it wouldn’t be good for me as a worker to be constantly going out to a family and the same issues coming up and we’re just not able to address them or we just can’t make the change. (SL 12)

### 6.3.3. Factor summary

The Jewell and Glaser (2006) framework posits that the system of formal and informal incentives existing in an organisation can affect how a worker behaves when implementing a programme. Formal and informal rewards, and formal and informal sanctions, for particular types of behaviour can serve as predictors of behaviour in achieving programme implementation.
The data presented under this factor highlight that a range of formal and informal incentives were at play in the implementation of Mol an Óige through the structuring of workers’ behaviour. The general absence of extrinsic rewards and sanctions for particular types of behaviour highlights, in one way, the limited potential for this as an explanatory factor. However, this does not mean it is not relevant at all.

Workers sourced their rewards in different ways: from doing a good job, from seeing improvements in families, from their sense of contributing to the well-being of families, from helping them. In this regard then, the vocation of the role is strong. This is more striking when ongoing engagement with families often required further administrative and face-to-face work. While these could have acted as a disincentive to progressing cases, as in the Jewell and Glaser (2006) scenario, this was not the case here. Receiving positive appraisal from both supervisors and other professionals in the field further enhanced this incentive for workers. Here, workers were motivated to implement the programme for the benefit of families due to intrinsic rewards they drew from their work, as well as the visible improvement they saw in families.

The role of informal sanctions is also noteworthy. Contrary to the traditional street-level thesis, workers were supervised on a regular basis. This supervision involved both face-to-face meetings, observations of practice in family homes, and auditing of paperwork. This supervision regime acted as an incentive to adhere to aspects of the approach. The potential for sanction by supervisors through these various mechanisms was enough for workers to behave in particular ways and thus avoid sanction. Lipsky argued that workers used their discretion to behave in ways which fitted the performance assessment regime in place in their organisation. It is evident that, in this sense, Mol an Óige workers were cognisant of the performance regime. However, it was not discretionary behaviour which ensured this, but rather a requirement to do so. They were conscious of their paperwork needing to be up-to-date, and the
potential for it to be audited at any time. As seen here and elsewhere in this study, this supervisor-worker engagement was not viewed as a conflictual one, but rather a mainly positive one, where cases could be discussed and progress made.

6.4. The role of knowledge and expertise in street-level work
Jewell and Glaser define knowledge and expertise as pertaining to a number of different elements of programme implementation. It involves workers’ understandings of programme rules and aims, and the skills workers have to facilitate the engagement of clients in the programme itself (Jewell and Glaser, 2006, p.341). Hence, this involves assessing the educational backgrounds of workers, specific training received for the programme’s implementation, and broader knowledge of agency and community resources. An important distinction here is between knowledge of resources and their use in engaging with clients. What is being inquired into here is the workers’ own knowledge of programme requirements, and knowledge of community resources rather than their use by and for clients (which comes under the factor of authority).

In the application of the framework in their study, Jewell and Glaser found that workers tended to have limited education and on-the-job training which, when combined with excessive workload, served to undermine the implementation of the programme. While some workers did not understand the rules governing the application of particular welfare entitlements, no workers had the requisite “social work” skills necessary to engage clients in a meaningful or individualised way about seeking employment.

Lipsky’s conceptualisation of knowledge tends to relate to the engagement of clients directly. Workers are prevented from using their knowledge and expertise to help clients by their excessive workload. In addition, a lack of training and other supports further impede their work. In the constantly
resource-poor world of Lipsky’s bureaucracies, workers are squeezed to simply do what they can (Brodkin, 1997). This absence of resources can impede the implementation of new technologies (Ellis, 2007). Even though there is evidence that some street-level bureaucrats are resourceful in sourcing their own support, through their expertise, peer group, experts (Jewell, 2007; Sandstrom, 2011), or through adopting processes (Foldy and Buckley, 2010), sometimes resource paucity is as fundamental as a lack of pens, paper and access to PCs (Brodkin, 1997).

6.4.1. Knowledge and use of theory and skills of Mol an Óige
Workers in this study were provided with a week-long training session before implementation began, designed to equip them with particular skills and process knowledge to implement it and support parents and families. This training was also accompanied by a two-day follow-up training session. The majority of workers highlighted difficulties with the training, in particular, that it focused on the theory and skills behind the approach, rather than the process of it. Almost all workers felt that the skills provided in these training sessions were not new to them – having acquired them through higher education and their practice.

Despite this sense of workers being previously knowledgeable of the skills provided to them, survey data highlighted that the workers’ knowledge of the majority of skills imbued in them as a result of Mol an Óige training had increased, or greatly increased, since working with parents and families in this way, with few if any negative assessments of their skill base. These skills, and their corresponding values, are outlined in Figure 21 below:
While workers felt that the skills introduced with training were not new, supervisors did identify that in certain situations workers were displaying characteristics which they had not done before. In particular, supervisors felt that staff were engaging more in the process of listening to clients and examining what they wanted out of the service than they would have done prior to Mol an Óige’s introduction. For example:

"Active listening would have been a very good one (skill) to have focussed on because some of the workers talked a lot and they’ve become more mindful now, taking the pauses and sitting back and letting the family have their speak more." (SP 1)

In addition to the training, many workers commented on the Mol an Óige approach as a resource for them, echoing Foldy and Buckley’s (2010) findings. Compared to how they worked previously, Mol an Óige was viewed as a very structured and better way of meeting the needs of families, and supporting parents’ goals, whatever they may be. While some workers used the term ‘model’ to describe Mol an Óige, the majority...
described it as a framework or approach to meeting the needs of families. In particular, workers spoke of its structure, that there were three parts to the work with families which provided a map to their engagement with parents and the delivery of the service. Workers spoke positively about this, and the sense that there were identified goals to work towards. More specifically, many workers spoke about the approach giving their own role definition where it was previously absent, particularly in the context of family support work, which was often described as being worthwhile, but sometimes vague. This sense of structure was also identified by supervisors:

It’s a nice structure. It’s just more definite. Sometimes with a case, with family support, you didn’t really know, “what’s my role”? You were just another body thrown in and everyone was kind of going, “well what are we all doing here”? So with this, you’re more defined in what you do, it’s certainly more clear. It gives you great satisfaction in what you bring to the table (SL 4).

A structure and a framework. It gives confidence in what you do as family support. Because family support, it’s as broad as it is long, it’s woolly. But not with this (SP 4).

That Mol an Óige gave the workers some clarity regarding a process for working with families increased their sense of authority in the implementation process. They viewed themselves as part of a service which was working to support parents to raise their children, to address problem behaviours in children by working with parents, imparting their skills-based knowledge for the betterment of families as a whole. In this regard, workers perceived their role as doing whatever it took to engage parents in this work, provide the skills, and eventually exit the work.

It has given me a framework on that which previously [had] no structure. Sometimes we’d be going into families for, looking back it was crazy, you could be in there for twelve months, more. I was sometimes sitting there in their sitting room thinking “Jesus, what am I doing here?” There’d be no direction. But this, you have your goals, your plan, it’s very focused, your skills, […]and with the plan being able to look and see what’s been done to date and that there’s an end in sight (SL 18).
“Workers would have, drift isn’t the right word, but rolled along and cases would have gone on a lot longer than we would have hoped, this has given them the process and structure (SP 2).

In this regard then, the dominant view amongst workers was that it thus provided a better way of impacting on parents and their parenting of their children. While family support work tended to always involve parents in the specifics of the work, the greater sense of structure which the approach brought to the engagement with clients and the increased emphasis on process was perceived as providing a better chance of outcomes being achieved for families.

As part of the approach, the assessment tools were viewed primarily as a useful resource in working with families to identify needs. More significantly, they were also viewed as mechanisms to ask difficult questions, and monitor progress in cases. As these two quotes from a worker and a supervisor illustrate:

If you were sitting down having a conversation you mightn’t be able to get all the questions that you need to ask asked. (SL 10)

Some workers would be saying “I am not really sure about asking about sexual abuse” and you are saying “no, this is a child protection concern”, so you can ask those things again [with the assessment] and review it again, and it’s a concrete scale to see if things are moving on or are they not. (SP 6)

Contained in many of the responses of workers and supervisors regarding the use of skills was the tension again between, on the one hand, the need to teach the parent particular skills, and on the other, not supplanting the parents’ role in the family unit, as highlighted previously under role expectation. In this regard, both workers and supervisors recognised the potential for knowledge and use of skills to evolve into doing parenting rather than supporting parenting. However, the Mol an Óige programme rules and the worker’s sense of what family support was about tended to counteract this potential. Thus, workers felt there was a need to maintain the support aspect of the approach, and challenge parents about their
parenting, rather than simply take on the tasks themselves. Central to this was the particular skills they used to adopt this position:

It’s also using that [skill] if you have to confront them and be truthful and say “look, this [your parenting] isn’t working”, and I think that for me is where I see it, as being what it means in practical terms of working. But it’s the working together that is the huge part. But that’s not always as it seems, some families just expect you to do it all and it doesn’t facilitate that, because it’s about giving the skills and “you do it and I’ll be here but I’m not doing it for you”. (SL 1)

6.4.2. Supervision and reflection as resources
Both workers and supervisors spoke positively about the supervision process as a resource for their work in implementing Mol an Óige. The ability of workers to source advice from their supervisors in progressing cases along, or receive approval for particular activities or initiatives with a family, was important in implementing it with families. However, accessing this resource was often as much about being accountable or seeking approval as it was sourcing support. For example:

[Supervisor is] always there at the end of the phone if you want to pick it up and just say” I’m thinking of doing this with a family”, or “look I just wanted to ask you, or update you”. [...] So you can always pick up the phone to [them] and [the supervisor] would never say “well what did you do that for, what are you ringing me with that?” Definitely with managers I’ve had in the past, you’re on your own, just do it. So that’s a huge resource. (SL 12)

The value of both formal and informal peer supervision was strong amongst workers, with techniques and approaches shared, advice sought and problems collaboratively addressed in meeting the needs of families. For many, the experience of talking with someone doing similar work was a positive resource which energised them, especially when cases with parents were particularly challenging. Sharing the burden was important for many workers. More generally, the supervision process, either with a supervisor, or in a peer supervision structure, was viewed as a useful resource for workers to examine their own practice, to reflect on it and to
share ideas. As SL 3 stated:

I would have brought forward a few reflective practice styles, to be better reflective practitioners. So we incorporated the Gibbs Cycle as part of it; how are you, how is work, staff issues and then to bring a piece of work and actually work though the Gibbs cycle and just maybe something you were stuck on, what I was doing and saying if it didn’t work we’d bring it to the broader team here. Or [the supervisor] might say “that was really interesting what you learnt there; let’s share it if you’re ok with it”. (SL 3)

Survey data reveal that this opportunity for reflection provided by their organisation reportedly increased between baseline and follow-up. Figure 22 below highlights this change. Of note is the increase in the number of participants who strongly agreed with the statement, along with a significant decrease in those who disagreed. A Mann-Whitney U test revealed that the change between baseline (Md = 3, n = 22) and follow-up (Md = 4, n = 22) was statistically significant, U = 147.5, z = -2.355, p = .019, r = .35.

![Figure 22: Baseline and follow-up scores on agency opportunity for reflection](image)

Prominent amongst the responses from all workers was the role formal and informal peer support played in their work and meeting the needs of families. Talking through particular situations, sharing experiences of previous cases and specific strategies used, offering constructive criticism and more generally offloading about particular situations were all
highlighted by staff as being important supports to them in their work. For example:

I suppose just to have someone there to actively listen to you, or I suppose what I get great awareness from is constructive criticism, which I find very helpful; and I suppose as well sometimes if you come out of a family and you felt all this work has gone in and you feel defeated and to go back and talk to someone, it kind of motivates you again. It’s very helpful. (SL 19)

Some workers spoke of meeting up in the past to share experiences of the model and particular cases, although this had since ceased. Other staff spoke of not being co-located with other colleagues as a challenge to accessing this type of support.

Foldy and Buckley’s (2010) work on the implementation of new child welfare practices resonate strongly here. They found that implementation and team learning tended to be more successful where workers felt there was a clear process to follow. Also of value was the role of reflection, which helped workers assess their procedures, identify gaps and consider new approaches. Team leadership was also an important aspect of the implementation environment in their study. Leaders and superiors can help workers negotiate difficult or challenging changes in their work and support workers more generally.

6.4.3. Broader skills, expertise and resources

6.4.3.1. Use of practice knowledge
A majority of respondents had received their formal professional education in social studies/social care (n=7), followed by childcare (n=6), and youth work (n=5). Community work, social work and ‘other’ accounted for the remaining four workers. Two workers had a diploma qualification, fourteen had a degree qualification, while six had a masters’ qualification. The role of this education and experience was obvious in workers’ accounts of their work. For example:

[I got the skills] from college, from doing it as a student, from practice, I worked in a place it was very therapeutic, that’s where,
well it’s all my learning and I suppose there is key emphasis on it in it [my work]. (SL 11)

In dealing with particular clients, workers felt that Mol an Óige did not fully enable them to meet needs and support parents and families. In these situations, many workers drew on their additional skills and used knowledge outside the bounds of the approach to support these clients in meeting their needs and achieving case goals. In particular, they reported drawing on their practice experience to supplement the explicitly behavioural nature of the approach. This was also corroborated by survey findings from follow-up data. When asked to identify the three main theories which they drew from in their practice on a day-to-day basis, attachment was the single largest response, with over half identifying it as an influencing theory. This is an interesting finding in that workers spoke about Mol an Óige dealing with the ‘here and now’, whereas attachment theory tended to look back into family history and child and parent relationships specifically.

Ten responses identified a cognitive behavioural approach, the explicit theory underpinning Mol an Óige. As outlined in Figure 23 below, a range of other theories were drawn on. Under the ‘other’ heading, a variety of responses was provided, including: child safety; resilience; family support; strengths-based; youth focus; children first; family systems theory; multi-systemic therapy; anti-discrimination; and family preservation.
As intimated in this graph, attachment training was highlighted as a significant skill used to overcome problems in particular cases. Where parents reported bonding issues with children, this was particularly the case. Other resources such as learning from different approaches or resource sheets acquired over the years of practice were utilised. A sense of being ethically required to meet the needs of parents in whatever way possible tended to imbue comments about the use of resources. For example:

I’m not claiming that I’m all knowing, all singing, all dancing but I think you’ve a responsibility really to work, to exhaust other options; and as a proper practitioner I think you have to. There’s no point in saying “sure listen it won’t work and good luck to you”. [...] You’ve a responsibility to educate yourself and up-skill yourself or do a course that might help a family now. (SL 3)

In this regard, workers spoke about accessing material from other approaches as well as elements of particular manualised programmes such as the Strengthening Families programme\(^\text{39}\), bereavement programmes for adults and children, and self-esteem or confidence building resources.

\(^{39}\) Strengthening Families is a manualised, time specific (set number of sessions, usually 14) programme for parents and children in both high and low risk groups. It has been implemented in a number of sites in Ireland. For example, see Duffy (2010). [http://www.strengtheningfamiliesprogram.org/about.html](http://www.strengtheningfamiliesprogram.org/about.html)
Contrary to other studies, workers felt they had the skills to meet the needs of most parents they worked with. Except in some circumstances (see section 6.4.3.3. below), workers were of the view that so long parents were willing to engage and take on some of the work, most cases could close successfully. In addition, unlike in Lipsky’s thesis, workers were not unduly burdened with excessive caseloads. They had the time to use their skills.

6.4.3.2. Financial and administrative resources
Lipsky argued that street-level bureaucrats had little time and few resources to engage meaningfully with clients in an individualised manner. Jewell (2007) highlighted that workers did not have appropriate resources available to them to meet the full need of clients engaging in activation services, while Brodkin (1997) noted that the lack of resources was more fundamental than skills. One particular resource which workers felt they had access to was the budget line of their own service. This operated at two levels.

Workers and supervisors both identified that service budget lines tended to enable workers to visit families in their home as often as was required or requested by the family. Given the community-based nature of the services, travel distances of up to 30 miles were not uncommon in some cases, and thus such a budget line was deemed essential to doing this type of work. At another level, many services used petty cash to meet the practical or concrete needs of parents and families at particular times. This often involved sourcing respite-type services for parents via activities for young people, or providing additional persuasive supports to engender engagement from families in the service. In certain cases, workers viewed this as working the full ecology of parenting, attempting to resolve financial issues by drawing in other services. For example:
When we had the money we paid for six weeks for the child to attend homework group and then linked in the home management advisor\(^{40}\) to ask families “okay, why can't you pay this?” (SL 14)

As this quote intimates, the impact of the economic crisis on services, and particularly on budget lines, affected workers’ ability to continue to meet the needs of parents as they did before. This was also apparent in the survey data with workers, where there was a notable decrease in the adequacy of funding perceived to be available to meet needs and achieve goals (see Figure 24). While 52\% (\(n = 11\)) disagreed with the statement ‘we do not have sufficient funding to achieve our goals’ at baseline, only 18\% (\(n = 4\)) disagreed with it at follow-up, with a notable increase in those who strongly agreed (14\%, \(n = 3\)) and those who were ambivalent on the issue (41\%, \(n = 9\)). A Mann-Whitney U test revealed that the change between baseline (Md = 3, \(n = 21\)) and follow-up (Md = 4, \(n = 22\)) was statistically significant, \(U = 152, z = -2.014, p = .044, r = .3\).

\[\text{Figure 24: Baseline and follow-up scores on adequacy of funding to achieve goals}\]

The availability and thus use of these financial resources altered in the years 2011, 2012 and 2013 for workers, with cuts to the national health and social care budget impacting on service budgets. Workers reported

\(^{40}\)The Home Management Advisory Service is provided by the Health Service Executive in Ireland. It provides in-home support to families on a range of practical issues such as budgeting, nutrition and personal development.
that there was not as much money for some broader aspects of provision, such as taking a parent and child out to lunch, or providing monies for a parent to buy a child a pair of football boots. Also, recent pronouncements regarding the imposition of limits on mileage for health and social care workers was a significant worry for workers in limiting their ability to undertake their work into the future. Many workers highlighted that their service managers were imposing informal limits which, while negotiable, had to be approved on a case-by-case basis:

What it is starting to impact now is our ability to meet the families as much as we would like to be meeting the families, and the reason there is the mileage cut backs and that we have to be very mindful of, we have a target in place at the moment but it’s negotiable, it isn’t in stone yet but it looks like it will go in stone soon down the line. (SL 24)

Mileage limitations not only affected a worker going out to a family home, but the ability of the worker to undertake travel with the parent or family. This, combined with insurance cost increases in using their car for work limited the opportunity to provide different forms of support as needed, whether providing support to access services or simply to provide some relief for a parent. As SL 21 stated:

And say if a mother wanted to get out of the house, you know, if she was really stressed and could do with getting out of the house I’d love to be able to say “come on in the car, we’ll go for a coffee”. Gone, that’s gone. (SL 21)

Budget cuts were also affecting the organisational context of work. Many workers did not have sufficient resources such as computers to undertake their work properly, echoing Brodkin’s (1997) findings of a lack of every day office resources to complete the job at hand. More specifically at the service level, the recruitment embargo was perceived by supervisors to impact greatly on their service’s ability to take on more cases and support families:

I suppose that when maternity leaves come up and she will be going on maternity leave and there won’t be a replacement for her,
so that is a huge concern. [...] There is no, the work waits and I suppose the referrals keep coming in as well, so...and it is not likely we are going to be getting any more workers. (SL 5)

6.4.3.3. Accessing resources from other services and professionals
The assessment process often raised a number of issues that affected the wider context of parenting which needed addressing. In meeting these needs, workers accessed a range of supports for themselves through their engagement with a wide variety of professionals. Workers drew on these contacts to source particular information and other resources to meet parents’ and families’ needs.

In many cases, workers’ positions gave them privileged access to other resources and they used such access to both gain knowledge for themselves in meeting case needs, or in particular circumstances to bypass waiting lists for particular services. Psychology was one such service mentioned frequently by workers and supervisors. While some workers had formal links with psychology, others did not; others were co-terminous with such service supports, while others were not. However, in all cases workers were willing to use their links to progress cases:

Yes, we have the psychology department. Now they’re very difficult to access, for the client population to access, but we have a working relationship with them. We can walk next door, knock, walk in and ask “what do you think of this”, so that’s very helpful. (SL 8)

Psychology played a number of roles for workers in meeting the support needs of parents. It offered a problem-solving environment where workers could bring issues about cases – either starting them or discussing specific issues which have arisen over the course of working with them. In this role the availability of psychological support on the phone between clinics was viewed as critical by workers. For example:

Maybe even before I’d even meet the family, I’d run it by him to see what his thoughts are on it [...] He’d give you a little bit of advice on what you need to guide yourself and your own assessment. You meet the family a couple of times, you might actually ring and say “listen [...] I want to run it by you again”, he’d say “no problem.” (SL 4)
Where family issues were particularly problematic, many staff highlighted the willingness of the psychology service – at the request of the worker - to meet with families directly as another element of this resource. The ability to undertake educational psychology assessments41 (and undertaking them quickly) was a third element cited by workers as particularly useful. Such a scenario is in stark contrast to that depicted in Jewell and Glaser’s work. There, workers were unskilled and had little support with the day-to-day work of meeting clients’ needs. The findings are similar to Hill’s (2003), in that access to additional sources of expertise can support implementation. Workers use this access and knowledge to support what they do with parents and families.

More generally, workers mentioned that they accessed a range of resources in supporting them in working with parents and families. The services which workers reported accessing for themselves included: public health nurses for particular advice on care of infants after babies were born; child and adolescent mental health services (often termed child guidance) for advice on emotional and behavioural issues in children; the community welfare officer (regarding the potential for a family to secure financial support for particular costs); and other professionals whom they knew on a personal basis and who had particular expertise (e.g. family support practitioner turned researcher, a play therapist).

Many workers highlighted that using the Mol an Óige approach to engage with families required a particular level of ability amongst parents to be able to take on the learning from the worker and apply it. For those who did have access to psychology support as part of their own service, the ability to break down some of the teaching components into very specific steps with the help of psychologists to be undertaken with such parents was referred to as a particularly useful resource for workers themselves.

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41 Educational psychology assessments are important in the Irish context. Access to supports for special educational needs is based on an assessment and diagnosis conducted by an educational psychologist. While many families are able to source these assessments privately, others are not (National Council for Special Education, 2013).
Its usefulness was underlined by the ready identification of its absence as an expertise resource by those who did not have access to it. Many workers did not have the skills to meet this client group’s needs, and therefore ended up working with them for some time before referring on to intellectual disability organisations, or more commonly just closing the case. Notable here is the issue of maintaining change. Workers identified that parents could make the change, but maintaining it was the issue:

I think learning ability, IQ, is a huge factor. Whether or not parents can learn, can sustain the learning and then process it and make it their own, that’s a huge one [factor]. We’d just close them [the cases] eventually (SL 1).

Related to this, staff did not have access to resources to address addiction issues amongst parents who presented or were referred to their service for support. While workers reported that parents with addiction, or what were perceived to be other mental health issues, were open to use the service, they reported that they did not have the required skill set to deal with the issues at hand in the family home. In many of these situations workers closed these cases early and referred on to treatment services where available. However, workers noted a paucity of services for parents in this regard:

I suppose just in terms of how best to facilitate parents with alcoholism, drug problems, those sorts of things. You can offer practical support there but I mean in terms of applying the approach I don’t feel, I feel like there needs to be something else to help facilitate those certain groups of parents. I think there’s definitely a resource issue there. (SL 26)

Paucity of formal supports and services was also an issue in trying to support parents with mental health difficulties, or where children were displaying worrying behaviours. Both adult, and child and adolescent mental health services were perceived to be very slow to take referrals, largely perceived to be due to cutbacks in public service recruitment. This infringed on resolving issues within homes, both for parents and for children. In many of these situations, referrals were made and cases were closed.
6.4.4. Factor summary
The Jewell and Glaser framework highlights the importance of knowledge and expertise of street-level workers in programme implementation. The use of a wide range of programmatic and more general resources can positively affect the implementation process and aid the process of supporting parents and families. The data presented here highlights worker’s use of programmatic resources to support parents and young people. In particular, the Mol an Óige process itself which the workers were required to follow when working with families was viewed as an important resource in programme implementation.

Consideration of the importance of the programme as contributing to workers’ adherence to family support principles is important here. That the programme put a structure in place which was not there before was deemed a significant contribution to workers ability to support parents and families. In short, they viewed it as a resource in and of itself to do family support. However, workers also drew on a range of wider resources in implementing the programme, acquired through their practice knowledge and wider education. Unlike the Jewell and Glaser case study (2006), and Jewell’s (2007) work elsewhere, workers had the requisite knowledge which they could access to support implementation in the majority of cases, but not all. Engaging clients with particular issues, especially around addiction, was difficult and an identified resource gap which workers could not address.

The role of supervision and the worker-supervisor relationship more generally is another noteworthy consideration here. As with incentives, the structuring of the supervisory relationship as a positive engagement is one which counters Lipsky’s dominant conflictual characterisation of this interaction. Workers here viewed supervision as a valuable resource, one which tended to offer a space for joint problem-solving, reflection and interaction. That supervisors knew particular cases as a result of the supervisory regime was a case in point. Workers were able to source
specific case support from supervisors due to the role of observations within the supervision structure. Again, Evans’ (2012) structuring of supervision in social care resonates here. Workers in social care tend, in general, to be immediately supervised by workers from the same profession. This, he argues, has the potential to change the nature of supervision from conflictual to consensual. The nature of professionalism is the explanatory factor in sourcing support from supervision.

6.5. Conclusion
For Jewell and Glaser, central to the examination of the factor role expectation is the perception of the workers’ own role in the implementation of a policy or programme, and how that relates to their perception of their work and their clients. When the role expectations of workers in this study are examined, it is clear that workers adopt dual roles, acting in both bureaucratic and entrepreneurial ways. They sought to implement the rules of Mol an Óige to support parents and families. However, they also worked flexibly outside of the rules to support families in particular ways beyond bureaucratically delivering the teaching elements of the approach. They moved between the essential requirements of implementation, and the wider requirements they felt were necessary to undertake as part of their vocation as family support workers. They did make moral judgements about some of their clients, while also advocating for them. Their measure of success (and motivation) was mainly client satisfaction. Hence, in all this they shift between state-agent and citizen-agent narratives of street-level behaviour, similar to Maynard-Moody and Musheno’s (2003) dichotomy. However, there is a tension here.

These workers recognise the importance of family support as a way of working and view their work in supporting parents as firmly grounded in this approach. In particular, they recognise the importance of being involved with families for the minimum amount of time necessary to
resolve their issues, a key family support principle. In taking on a citizen-agent role, they seek to support families any which way they can. They provide parenting skills and focus on the relationship between parent and child, but they also provide supports for themselves, and thus provide parent support as well. More significantly, perhaps, they also recognise that being more bureaucratically minded, taking a stronger role in simply teaching the skills rather than doing the parenting, requires them to stand back, requires them to be more state-agent than citizen-agent. In wanting to be family support-orientated, many of these workers have to go against their own vocation, and act bureaucratically. However, there is no narrative of self-interest in this. They act in a state-agent manner, yet display characteristics of citizen-agents. While supervision can control discretion to a degree in street-level bureaucracies, the more significant control amongst this group of workers appears to be their own set of values.

Examining knowledge and expertise as a factor has also contributed to our understanding of the behaviour of these workers when supporting parents and families. While Mol an Óige could be a Lipskian case processing mechanism imposed by management, these workers are not overburdened with endless caseloads and unreasonable demands (as will be demonstrated in the next chapter) requiring the exercise of discretion to deal with such demands. They are quite the opposite in fact. It created the space for them to work in greater depth with fewer families, to engage more with them and meet their needs. The principles of family support again play a role in framing workers’ perspectives on the approach. While it does routinise their work, it does so in a way which permits workers to justify their limited intervention with families, work in partnership with parents, work towards outcomes and be needs-led. The notion of the tension between the citizen-agent and state-agent comes to the fore again.

Unlike a traditional Lipskian analysis, workers and supervisors are not always in conflict in this study. Workers spoke broadly positively about
supervision as a resource, as something which they can call on to support their practice. Mol an Óige emphasised the importance of good supervision. In this study, workers felt that supervisors were a valuable resource for them. They provided guidance, acted as a sounding board and provided support in working with families. The relationship is reciprocal, not conflictual. Workers also go beyond the bounds of the approach to supplement their Mol an Óige knowledge with their wider experience and skills built up over years of practice. They sought to meet the needs of clients with these particular skills to achieve case goals, even though these skills are outside the bounds of Mol an Óige. They are drawing on their own practice resources to meet these clients’ parenting and family needs in numerous ways. The difficulty emerges when other professional services or financial resources are required to meet the broader needs of parents, such as money to take them out for a bit of emotional support, or more importantly, if referral to psychological services is required. For other clients again, workers reported that in certain situations, or for certain clients, workers did not have the skills necessary to support parents in all the ways needed by a particular client. Working the full ecology of parenting is difficult for those engaged in providing support to parents and families.

Analysis of the factor incentives has contributed greatly to our understanding of street-level behaviour when examining the implementation of parenting support. Workers report the general absence of formal rewards in their organisation for undertaking particular courses of action in implementing the Mol an Óige approach. Instead, workers draw their rewards from intrinsic sources, such as job satisfaction, and the sense of vocation with which they entered public service in the first place. The sense of doing a good job, of working with families to help them to improve their family lives in a variety of ways was highlighted as a key reward for workers. It was also highlighted as a key motivator, as something which drove workers in their work. Also significant here is the
role of the Mol an Óige approach itself. Seeing it work for families has increased workers’ tendencies to use it with other families and increase their satisfaction with and motivation for their work, akin to Taylor’s (2013) findings.

Other professionals seeing it work and commenting on it also reinforced this, and their commendations acted as an additional informal reward for these workers. The reward in successfully working with parents is perhaps most significantly underscored by their willingness to engage in numerous iterations of various family plans and related paperwork in implementing it with families. This echoes the findings of Nielsen (2006), who identified that street-level bureaucrats were enticed to cope due to the intrinsic benefits they derive from their work: they enjoy the work (self-fulfilling man) and enjoy the engagement (social man). In Jewell and Glaser’s work (2006), the increase in paperwork resulting from the promotion of the policy goal acted as a disincentive for workers to implement a programme. However, this was not the case here.

Incentives has highlighted the nature of street-level behaviour and the motivation of workers to progress implementation of parenting support. While it has raised important information, it has also highlighted the self-referential nature of Mol an Óige as a motivation itself. Again, Tummers and Van de Walle (2012) highlight that if street-level workers feel alienated from a programme, or feel that it will not benefit the clients with whom they work, they will be less likely to implement such a programme. A focus on incentives here as required by Jewell and Glaser has highlighted the need to be cognisant of the role of motivation as opposed to simply what rewards workers.

In summation, this chapter has presented and discussed findings in relation to a central sub-question in this study: what is the relationship between street-level bureaucratic behaviour and these three organisational factors when implementing parenting support? Workers view what they do as
firmly grounded in the concept of family support. While they support parents, they see themselves as supporting families. The principles of family support serve to check their behaviour, drawing many of them back from trying to do everything for clients. While they are incentivised to work with parents through their sense of vocation, they are also motivated by seeing positive results for families and being acknowledged by their supervisors for good work done. They bring both programmatic and broader skills to their work with parents, and access knowledge for their own practice in this world. Supervision is a resource which is tapped into, a space where reflection can occur. However, there are challenges in meeting family needs. Workers do not have all the skills necessary to meet parent needs such as addiction and mental health services, and are limited by the increasing financial pressures which services must operate under.
Chapter Seven: Street-level behaviour and client factors

7.1. Introduction
As outlined in chapter two, the role of policy recipients, clients, in the implementation process is an important consideration when examining street-level behaviour. A number of factors in the Jewell and Glaser (2006) framework suggest that, to generate a fuller understanding of street-level behaviour in implementing policy, analysing the interactions between the worker and those that they work with and for is necessary. Thus, the data presented in this chapter address the following question: what is the relationship between street-level bureaucratic behaviour and client factors when implementing parenting support? The elements of the framework which have been characterised as client-orientated for the purposes of the study are: authority; workload; and client contact.

The chapter is broken down into three sections. Section 7.2 examines the authority of street-level workers when implementing parenting support through Mol an Óige. This mainly examines the discretion workers have in their day-to-day work with parents and children. An important aspect of street-level analysis, discretion is often viewed in the existing literature as a central determinant of workers’ behaviour. It can be afforded to workers as a result of the relationships they have with their clients as well as their supervisors. Examining the supervisor-worker relationship and how it influences worker-client interaction is thus an important aspect of the study. Section 7.3 examines the impact of workload on street-level behaviour. The street-level perspective assumes that workloads are unmanageable and thus workers are required to cope in particular ways. While quantitative assessments are important in considering workload, qualitative perspectives also warrant consideration here, particularly where there is an absence of clarity about what the policy being implemented constitutes. Section 7.4 looks at the nature of client contact. Central to this section is the examination of the role of the client in the
implementation process. As in the previous chapter, each section begins with a brief recap of the definition of the factor under consideration before qualitative and quantitative data is presented in the context of existing literature.

7.2. Authority and street-level behaviour
As outlined in chapter two, Jewell and Glaser define authority as “the ability of workers to have an impact on others, in this case clients, by virtue of their position” (2006, p. 341). In other words, this is the power that workers can exercise over clients. This power is sourced formally from workers’ job descriptions which may require them to act in certain ways or do particular things, but also informally through the discretion they exercise in deciding when and how to use their power. Such power can manifest itself in the workers’ ability and willingness (or not) to sanction service users or access agency resources for them.

As reflected in the literature review in chapter two, there are a number of considerations when examining this factor. For Jewell and Glaser (2006), exercise of authority was revealed in the benefits and services which workers could provide to clients. However, workers were detached from other aspects of the implementation process relating to client employment, such as job placement elements. More significantly, perhaps, was the impediment to building trust with clients which existed as a result of workers’ ability to sanction or punish clients through withholding benefits and services. While workers differed on the skill level they possessed to engage clients, an inability to gain trust severely hampered the implementation process and the achievement of goals.

Given the characterisation of authority in the Jewell and Glaser framework, much of Lipsky’s work is relevant here. Regarding power over and control of clients, as outlined in greater detail in chapter two (section 2.5.4.), Lipsky (1980) asserts that workers engage in routine control over clients in a number of ways, including controlling the setting in which the
engagement occurs (in an office), isolating clients and deciding on key aspects of the engagement such as timing, pace and content of the interaction. When a client does not adhere to the routines imposed by the worker they are sanctioned, through reduction in or withdrawal of service provision and associated resources.

The discretion street-level workers have over their clients and the autonomy they possess from their line managers and supervisors provides much of the basis for Lipsky’s thesis. Managers and supervisors are deemed to be unable to monitor all aspects of street-level work to assess whether roles and procedures are being implemented systematically. Workers themselves can further expand this autonomy through measures such as withholding from or only providing limited information to supervisors about cases, and not or only partly implementing particular rules and regulations.

In a street-level bureaucracy, the nature of worker-supervisor relationships is central to understanding discretion. Worker discretion can also be exercised through administrative steps to process clients and manage workload, such as simplifying the goals of their work, deciding which clients may be more worthy than others for intervention and support, referring on, and at times denying themselves discretion in engaging with clients through the use of phrases such as “that’s the law” (measures which are clearly seen in Maynard-Moody and Musheno’s (2003) characterisation of both state-agent and citizen-agent narratives of street-level behaviour).

As we saw in chapter two, many scholars challenge Lipksy’s view. Evans (2011) found that managers and frontline workers were often at one about many aspects of street-level work. They shared the same reservations about aspects of the policy which they were charged with implementing. Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003) refer to the understanding afforded by caseworkers to supervisors who may have come up through the ranks and thus understand the pragmatism which is often required in street-level
work. Their findings suggest that the needs of clients are more important in
determining behaviour than the actions of supervisors, similar to Riccucci’s
work (2005) which found that the main reference point for street-level
behaviour was not organisational officials (managers and supervisors) but
rather the clients that they worked with.

The importance of professionalism featured in Evans (2011), as well as in
the work of May and Winter (2009). While Evans (2011) found that workers
and supervisors shared common professional ground, May and Winter
(2009) determined that the influence of managerial actions on street-level
work towards the policy goal was limited. Although supervisors drew
attention to particular rules and procedures, the broader transmission of
policy goals was relatively low. Scott (1997) found that many workers
embraced elements of the supervisory process, such as paperwork and
meetings, as a form of accountability for them. Having to justify their work
was an important safeguard for them. Ellis (2007, 2011) found a range of
discretionary paradigms in her study of street-level behaviour across two
decades: typical street-level behaviour; professional behaviour; service-
user behaviour; and managerial-influenced behaviour.

7.2.1. What workers were required to do
Workers were required to fulfil a number of aspects of their work in using
the Mol an Óige approach. The administration of specific assessments was
a particular requirement. However, as outlined in chapter five, their
administration was uneven. Workers tended to report exercising
discretion in using these assessments, particularly a specific assessment
tool of approximately thirty pages. Workers spoke about it not
contributing to the process of supporting parents or families. Regarding
this latter point, supervisors in hindsight approved this exercise of
discretion, as these two quotes highlight:

There’s differences in the assessment work. The ecological
assessment was a massive document that took a lot of time to fill in
and it was questionable as to the usefulness of it. Our new
assessment tools are much smaller but they get the information we’re looking for very quickly. We can get the information we’re looking for on a visit with a family. (SL 24)

Well the ecological assessment was too long winded and it was too laborious and tedious and it was really questionable what was coming out of it in terms of concrete issues to deal with. (SP 5)

However, there were other instances where workers also took short cuts in administering the approach. The use of other, voluntary, forms of assessment were also determined by workers’ perspective on the individual parent. For example, workers decided whether and when the social network grid or map was used. The purpose of the grid was to identify individuals in a parent’s life who could provide support to them. It was not a long or complex assessment process but, as the comment from SL 17 below outlines, it had potential to do more harm than good:

The social network map, I find that a little bit difficult with a lot of families because they don’t have a huge social network and for instance it may not be suitable to use that with some families because it’s just going to highlight how socially excluded they are. So in some cases I would have brought it to my supervisor, “it’s not ok to use this. I don’t feel like this is going to be of benefit to me or to them to highlight that they don’t have any friends or family around them.” (SL 17)

While workers did emphasise the role of the family in identifying such issues – that the issues to be addressed are the family’s issues - it was clear in the data that the assessment form was a mechanism by which workers exercised power and influence over the parent, and could steer work towards what they viewed were the key issues. This was particularly the case with one form, the Strengths and Stressors assessment used for service planning and implementation. Ideally, both family and worker scored the assessment, but in the case of a conflict the worker’s score was the one that was incorporated into the family plan. In cases where social workers referred families into the service, workers reported that those referral criteria, where specific enough, were incorporated as well. This notion of steering families and the potential for conflict was prominent in
comments from supervisors, and also from workers. The two quotes below, one from social work family support and one from community-based services, highlight the role of the worker in influencing the family plan process:

So I’d go through that then [the assessment], areas will either emerge as strengths or concerns more or less and areas of need. Then from that I’d go back to the parent, feedback that information that I’ve found and include what I would foresee as some of the stuff they might like to work on in the family service plan. They either agree or disagree, and they’ll add to the agenda of what they’d like included on that. (SL 26)

You’re also kind of observing yourself, what you feel yourself the issues are. And then you come to a point at which you say “ok, lets meet and look at what the real issues are here” [....] From there then the family plan should address the family’s agenda. A lot of the time I suppose it addresses our agenda as well, and the two should probably be the same thing, but they mightn’t be all of the time. (SP 4)

In the main, the development of the family plan was characterised as a collaborative process, as illustrated in the comments of SL 26 above, although the power balance of worker over client is apparent. The role of the worker in framing the initial plan through the assessment process was clearly described by the workers themselves. The space created for families to identify goals was spoken of as being part of a frank discussion with parents, but also as being part of something which had to happen to ensure participation and engagement. However, as the comment below from supervisor SP 1 illustrates, directing the work towards what the service viewed were the key issues was a part of such a participation-inducing mechanism:

You might see that something else is a big issue, but you’re dealing with what they’re asking you to deal with and you can then work towards, veer towards what that other issue is when you get the other one sorted with them. And by meeting their agenda it just means that they have a buy in with it. (SP 1)
Workers were free to decide if these issues got incorporated into the family plan dependent on progress of the initial issues. Crises often emerged in families, and workers reported the freedom to suspend family plan implementation and address the situation.

These findings tend to echo Lipsky’s thesis and more recent studies on street-level discretion. Lipsky argued that discretion and the exercise of power was inevitable, given the tasks which some street-level bureaucrats were required to do. Evans and Harris (2004) note that even where organisations impose new processes to try and delimit discretion – and Mol an Óige could be interpreted in this way – such processes result in new junctures in the worker-supervisor relationship where discretion can be effectively negotiated (Ellis, 2007; Ellis, Davies and Rummery, 1999). For these authors, professional judgement necessary in street-level work results in different grades of discretion. It can be exercised at the macro-level, in relation to policy, but also at the micro-level, in relation to case decisions. The introduction of both mandatory and voluntary assessments provided such a juncture. It is clear that workers were able to resist undertaking assessments for particular reasons and discuss this with their supervisor. Workers enjoyed a form of discretion which could be thus described as negotiated. However, they exercised more control and authority over the parent and family in other, formal aspects of delivering parenting support through Mol an Óige: While families participated, workers steered and kept control over some elements of the engagement.

7.2.2. Supervision and the exercise of discretion
Workers delivering support to parents through the Mol an Óige approach were subject to an extensive supervision process, as outlined in chapter five. This involved regular meetings with their supervisors, informal contact, file auditing and observations of practice with families. Immediately it is noticeable that such a supervisory context is markedly different to that outlined by Lipksy (1980). He argued that the complex nature of the work of street-level bureaucracies meant that managers and
supervisors were unable to systematically monitor everything that a worker did, and in particular whether certain procedures were being adhered to. Thus, workers were autonomous in what they did. In addition, he also suggested that workers and supervisors had a predominantly conflictual relationship. Where managers were merely interested in results, workers were interested in meeting their own, self-defined interests.

In this study, workers spoke about the supervision process as being central to undertaking their work. In the main they spoke very positively about supervision, as well as observation and file auditing, and its impact on their work with families. Supervision also played a part in providing assurance to the family regarding the role and actions of the worker. This was particularly the case with the observation element, where supervisors visited families in their homes to observe the worker engage with the parent. Workers spoke of the observations generally being accepted by clients, with few problems arising for families in having another person in their home. Through observation, many workers spoke of their own work being more accountable:

I think it reassures [...]. I’ve said [to [parents] “look my manager will come out [...] and just do an observation and they’ll only be here, [...] 20 minutes, half an hour maximum. Just to sit there and all they’re doing is observing me interacting with you to ensure that you’re getting what you deserve to get and if you have any issues you can speak to the manager”. [...]. I thought it was reassuring for them, for the client. (SL 9)

More prominently, supervision provided reassurance to the worker. Through having their work observed workers sought reassurance on the approach they were taking with families and affirmation they were implementing the programme as it was intended to be. In this regard, workers and supervisors both spoke of supervision as “support” to the worker, as being a two-way process in which workers had an opportunity to discuss their particular strategies in and open and positive way.

Workers viewed supervisors in the main as supporting their work:
I’ve often phoned [my supervisor], sometimes if I said something in a home or suggested something, or done something, I might want to just run it by [the supervisor]. And usually it would be ok, you know, but there’d be that support. (SL 21)

Many workers reported that on occasion they wanted direction in their work, and looked forward to supervision so as to receive guidance in particular aspects of individual cases. This was especially the case when family work was reported to be “stuck”, where progress was not being made in the family plan.

This characterisation of supervision resonates strongly with the accountability aspects of discretion and street-level implementation in the literature. We are reminded of Kaufman’s words (1977, cited in Scott, 1997, p.52) that one person’s red tape “may be another’s treasured procedural safeguard.” Similarly, in Ellis’ (2011) practitioner paradigm of discretion, workers welcomed new forms of oversight as it enhanced accountability. They brought clarity where previously there was little, and made it clear to the worker what needed to be done. Uncertainty was reduced.

However, supervisors were clearer on the role supervision played as a process in instructing workers to ensure that particular tasks were done. While some are very explicit about it, others identified a more subtle strategy to entice particular courses of action:

I mean like if I’ve [a worker] in supervision after I allocate a case and the assessment isn’t done after the first two or three weeks I’ll be asking questions. If the family plan isn’t done on week four, week five I’ll be asking questions. If there’s not a visit done every week I’ll be asking questions. If I’m not seeing changes in two months I’ll be asking questions. (SP 5)

In relation to the issues that come up within the family, that can be difficult because as a supervisor you read things differently and if you make suggestions they can be taken badly if they’re going “I’ve tried everything”. And again, I think that’s just about knowing your worker and how to plant a seed and start that discussion, “have you tried this”? I’ve had it where the wall has gone up and they didn’t want to hear and then they came up with the same suggestion.
themselves the next month and they’re going “oh this worked” and I’d say “Ok, we’ll run with that then”. (SP7)

Despite their expressed desire for supervision, some workers spoke of their discretion being checked or bounded by supervisors in particular ways or situations. The limits of supervisor observation were cited as one example. Numerous workers reported that their practice was being judged on the basis of a small number of observations across an entire family case. In these observations only particular issues were being addressed, hence supervisors did not see the full range of workers’ practice. Many workers and supervisors highlighted the difficulties in discussing worker behaviour in case supervision based on such small observation numbers. This would appear to validate Lipksy’s (1980) argument that not everything in a street-level bureaucracy can be observed. However, supervisors tended to be more adamant that, despite the limited observations, picking workers up on aspects of their practice was valid. It would appear from Mol an Óige that it introduced a greater level of supervision than existed before.

In engaging with families, a small number of workers reported that they had been specifically instructed not to provide particular supports which fell outside the Mol an Óige boundary. In the main, this involved providing “generic” family support as opposed to the specific skills-led approach of Mol an Óige. While these workers reported that their supervisors instructed they discontinue the provision of this general support, on a couple of occasions workers maintained provision through withholding information from their supervisors. The citizen-agent narrative resonates again here (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003). However, with these workers some were conscious that such a situation could impede their future discretion in working cases and supporting families in the rigid context of the programme. As SL 7 explained:

I think I could be [limited], if I got a case like this again I think [the supervisor] will be more alert to the fact that I might try to do the case the same way I’ve just done this last case, and that I’m open to doing a lot of family support stuff before the Mol an Óige is truly,
purely implemented. I think [the supervisor] will try to pull me back and ultimately I'll have to because [the supervisor] won't let me work that way anymore. (SL 7)

More common was the lack of discretion workers had over the decision to close cases. Many workers reported that they were instructed by their supervisors to close cases, even though they felt that the parents, while requiring less support than at previous times in the engagement, still required some support to have their issues completely addressed. While a small number of workers reported that they felt supervisors were open to discussion about cases remaining open, in the main workers felt that there was a pressure to close cases due to referral numbers more than any ascription of family support principles of minimum intervention possible:

And this parent had suffered from depression, and I just felt a little more support was needed (at the end). But I was overruled, “no, it has to finish now, we can’t work anymore here, it’s too long [......] it has to peter out”. So, case closed. (SL 9)

It would be brought up in supervision as to why a case isn’t closing. “Why are you stuck? What’s going on here?” I suppose it depends on how many cases are coming in, workload issues, and feeling under pressure to close cases. But you have to be closing cases for the right reasons. (SL 17)

This is also echoed in the words of SL 9 in the previous chapter under the incentives factor (section 6.3.2.2.) This sense of resistance to managerial instruction is mixed in the data. Some workers were quite forceful in talking about continuing to work with families, others less so. Supervisors’ perspectives are interesting in this regard. While all cases were cited as being individual, there was a sense of processing cases towards closure in these comments, and other elements of Lipsky’s thesis, such as referring on:

I find as a supervisor it can be a bit of a challenge to them [workers], saying “OK, what’s left to be done? This can close. What can be passed on here” [......] you’ll make a plan, “what’s next on the agenda?” “So, how are we moving this on?” (SP 3)
However, other supervisors were open to the possibility of cases remaining open if there was a specific need. Indeed, one supervisor in particular highlighted that where ongoing need existed, support would be provided:

I’m the manager of the service, I coordinate all this, there’s demand, but like if there’s an unmet need we’ll keep it open, we’ve done it. (SP5)

These quotes suggest that the supervisors in this study move between typical street-level managers and those which inhabit Evans’ (2011) and Ellis’ (2011) paradigms. On the one hand they are concerned with processing cases, but on the other hand they will keep cases open where needs are unmet. However, workers’ accounts would appear to suggest that the typical street-level supervisor is dominant. Although some workers, as cited elsewhere, challenged supervisors over case closure, workers’ generally felt that they had to close cases when instructed to: that to continue would potentially impede their future practice. The shared assumptive worlds of Young (1977, cited in Murray, 2006) are challenged in these stories. Although some workers in Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003) go it alone, the nature of the supervision process here prevents all-out autonomy.

Survey data indicated that there was a slight reduction in the median values of the numbers of cases closed in the previous year, from six to five (see Figure 25 below). The lower number of cases closed could indicate a variety of things, such as workers having less cases (which was the case for those working via the Mol an Óige approach). However, it could also suggest that workers using the approach tended to work for longer with families.
7.2.3. Accessing resources for families
One of the primary resources which workers had control over was their own time and skills. Workers brought their own skills to the task of supporting parents and chose when to apply them. While some workers maintained a nine-to-five day, others made themselves available to parents out-of-hours to provide support at particular times or in particular situations, like when helping with bedtime routines, or at weekends. This support took the form of both telephone contact and direct in-home support. While these workers did report that this was possible to provide to all families, there was a greater tendency to provide such support to families which were engaging with the service and trying to apply the parenting skills. Workers identified that those families which tended to engage would be open to such support, hence it was easier to provide, and as a result of their engagement workers were more likely to provide it. Engaging in such supportive behaviour was left to the discretion of the individual worker, but was broadly bounded by the support of the supervisor:

What’s come up for me in supervision with different staff members is they’re going “I have to go out to 3 cases, 3 evenings and I’m working late”. So you’re kind of going, “ok if that’s what you’re willing to do or choosing to do […] do you need to come in in the
mornings?” And they’re like, “I never thought of that. Why am I doing 10 hour days when I should be doing 8?” (SP 7)

It is important to state the there was no expectation or requirement of workers to engage outside of office hours, but many of them did. This type of behaviour points to the role of the parent and family as reference point for street-level behaviour, similar to that outlined by Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003) and Riccucci (2005). It echoes elements of the state-agent/citizen-agent narrative referred to in chapter six (section 6.2.2.), between those who perceived their role in a broad, client-orientated way and those who maintained a teaching role. At the same time, that workers favoured those who were more willing to engage resembles parts of the more Lipskian state-agent narrative, where clients are treated differently based on levels of activity. Inactive clients tend to be sanctioned or ignored (Lipsky, 1980).

In working with parents and families, workers were provided with a range of resources to foster particular behaviours in service users. As outlined in chapter five, the Mol an Óige process was loosely delivered in stages or phases. As part of the early phase, workers could deliver a quick-and-early, the provision of tangible or informational support to address an issue which was causing parents particular stress in their family life. Workers described it as a once-off, non-committal support, such as the provision of a pair of football boots for a child or the sourcing of particular equipment, such as a second-hand washing machine, fridge freezer or cooker. All workers emphasised that they tended to always provide this type of concrete support in their work, but did not use it in such structured or intentional ways prior to Mol an Óige.

While the majority of workers did report that they used such a resource, some reported that they did not administer the quick-and-early in the first few visits due to its potential to be construed as a bribe. In other cases, workers reported that the quick-and-early was often used multiple times in a case, but that this was curtailed by the limits of the service’s budget and
ultimately their supervisor. While central to the provision of parenting support, the tangible quick-and-early, which required the use of financial resources, had to be approved by supervisors. No worker reported having an initial quick-and-early refused, while some reported that resources were sanctioned so additional supports could be provided.

**Other resources**

In addition to their own resources as workers, and those specifically attached to Mol an Óige, workers also accessed resources directly for parents. These included community (development) projects and other community workers which may have been running particular courses or personal development classes; Foróige, a national youth organisation which runs programmes and youth clubs; the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC), which was running a volunteer-led parenting mentoring scheme; the State’s Money, Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS); the St. Vincent de Paul, a national charity; Juvenile Liaison Officers, members of An Garda Siochána, the Irish Police Force with a specific remit to work with young people who were coming into contact with the law; teachers; general practitioners (family doctors); local authorities (responsible for social housing provision in Ireland); Citizens Information Centres; addiction services; and Brothers of Charity, a voluntary organisation which provides social services. The nature of the support tended to be mainly informational, although a small number of staff did highlight that they accessed this support to link families in to other services for more specific forms of support.

In addition, supplementary financial support provided by the Community Welfare Officer42 was reported as resource frequently used by workers, however, the majority reported that it was not available to the extent that it was before. Hence, there was a greater reliance on charity organisations

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42 At the time of the research, the Community Welfare Officer (CWO) was part of the Health Service Executive but is now a part of the Department of Social Protection. The main function of the CWO remains to provide discretionary financial and practical support to families in need on a case-by-case basis.
such as the St. Vincent de Paul, or local charity shops to try and meet the concrete needs of parents and families.

While this data may give the impression that workers are referring on in accordance with Lipsky, this does not appear to be the case. Lipsky argued that in trying to address excessive workloads workers simply processed clients; in effect they moved them on. Such a practice was also relevant in the work of Ellis (2007). Here, workers accessed these resources in addition to undertaking their own work with clients. They sought to draw in as many resources as possible relevant to each client’s needs as opposed to simply moving them on. In the strict sense of the definition of the factor, these workers did not have the authority to provide for these clients to meet all their needs; however they did try to utilise their own knowledge and networks to overcome this gap, to support parents in broader ways. In the words of Tummers et al. (2015), these workers moved towards clients through these forms of instrumental action, rather than moving away or against them.

7.2.4. Sanctioning families
There were two main ways in which workers sanctioned families. The first way concerned the use or non-use of particular elements or skills with parents dependent on their behaviour. The skill of confrontation or challenge was reportedly used by workers with parents when knowledge imparted was not being used, or when particular pieces of work were not followed through between visits. Workers reported that skill of challenging was often required when parents were viewed as repeatedly not using the skills taught to them by the worker or behaving in what was an inappropriate way towards their children. While some workers interpreted this as being supportive to parents, in the main it was commented on as being more of a challenge to their parenting practice. As SL 26 highlighted:

It’s a balance. You can understand their frustrations as a parent but at the same time you have to say, “well, look, it’s not OK you calling
Withholding praise was also viewed as a sanction in this regard. One worker, in particular, highlighted that they could not use praise with a parent given the situation that parent had placed their children in. This was structured by the worker as withholding something from the parent, from the service user:

I had a mother I couldn’t praise, because of what she’d done to her kids. I just could not go in and praise her, no matter how hard I tried. I said to [my supervisor] that I couldn’t. I couldn’t do that, I couldn’t give her that. (SL24)

However, the main way in which workers could sanction their clients was withdrawal of the service. This occurred where parents were deemed not to have engaged sufficiently or not at all with workers over a period of time. In these situations, numerous workers reported having to “call it”, meaning that they would have to call an end to providing or attempting to provide support to parents. Workers indicated that the decision to sanction clients in this way was not always taken quickly, but was based on experience of the case over a number of months, and was taken in conjunction with their supervisor. In the overwhelming majority of cases where this sanction was applied, families not engaging, or not engaging meaningfully, were cited as the main reason for withdrawal. As the comments of SL 21 illustrate:

Call it [close a case]; you’re wasting your time. Because I’m going in there, like I could be going in there for the next six weeks. I could be going in there for the next three months, and you’d still be meeting... you’d still have a family that aren’t engaging. It’s a total waste of time, and I tell you, it’s fierce frustrating. (SL 21)

As indicated above, supervisors had the ultimate say in whether a case could close or not. Supervisors spoke of their tendency to go and meet with the family along with the worker to discuss any issues which may be arising for them which is preventing their engagement with the work at
hand. Where some families did have genuine issues (for example, in keeping appointments), supervisors did not withdraw the service, but instead reaffirmed the service’s commitment to them. However, subsequently in some of these cases, and in those where there was no issue other than not wanting to engage, supervisors used a similar language of having to call it. As SP 5 and SP 4 both commented:

We will try and deal with them again and break it down and we’ll give it a fair go and it’s only at the end of the day after a good try at it and if they’re still not engaging, we can’t get them into the room, we can’t get them to turn up for appointments, we can’t get them to engage in a conversation, then you’re at the end of the road. (SP 5)

It’s just how long you pursue it. The sanction would be that they might not get the level of support from the service. But generally you try and keep going with them and get them to buy in, but not always. (SP 4)

The voluntary nature of the service was cited as an explanation for sanctioning of parents in this way. In this regard, workers again emphasised the family support philosophy of the service and the actions, and that parents had to be motivated to become involved in the service. While young people who were worked with as part of the programme often did not engage, workers still provided support to their parents. However, if parents chose not to engage, in both cases open to social work and those of a lesser need, the service was withdrawn.

Lipksy (1980) noted that as part of the process of controlling clients workers tended to sanction them for not following their practice routines. Such sanctioning mainly involved the reduction or complete removal of service provision. As elsewhere, in the case of sanctioning clients in this study, workers’ discretion is bounded by their supervisor. Supervisors understand that workers can experience frustrations in working with parents and families who do not engage (fully). However, it is clear that they take the decision themselves. While we may see workers as being rigid rule followers, eschewing their own discretion in a “that’s the law”
type of way, data from chapter five indicates that where cases closed due to non-engagement, the length of time between service initiation and case closure was long, averaging 6.5 months. Hence, there is little sense that this is a move simply to reduce their own workload, but rather is more about being faithful to doing good family support: parents and families should voluntarily choose to engage.

7.2.5. Factor summary
Jewell and Glaser (2006) suggest that the authority a street-level worker has over their client can significantly impact the implementation process and achievement of policy goals. In their study, the limits of workers’ power effectively resulted in the policy not being implemented and the goals not being achieved. They did not have control over all aspects of the infrastructure established to move clients into employment. While they could sanction clients through withholding benefits, this power prevented them from building the required trust necessary to meaningfully engage with clients.

The data in this study suggest that street-level workers’ discretion does influence what parents receive in the form of support in a number of ways. The workers’ power over the assessment process is a case in point. While families are included in the process, workers get to decide ultimately how assessments are scored and what gets included in the family plan. As the main resource, workers also decide who gets what. Workers here reported that they were more inclined to do more for those who engaged with them and connect them to other services. This ability to provide parenting as well as parent support – as outlined in chapter two – however was affected by challenges in accessing other resources and supports. Retrenchment as well as the absence of worker authority in the broader aspect of parent support meant that workers could only reliably deliver at the immediate level and in the context of providing parenting support.
The nature of authority is also affected by the supervision process. Supervision, while viewed as positive, also challenged workers to change their practice. In this way, their discretion was bounded and the supervision relationship mixed. Some workers recounted stories of challenging supervisors and more problems with supervision, others of being instructed to close cases. Ultimately, while workers could sanction clients through withholding resources or forms of support, they could not close a case without the approval of their supervisor.

There is an inevitability in street-level work that some autonomy from the organisation will occur. In drawing attention to the role of authority in the provision of parenting support through Mol an Óige, the Jewell and Glaser framework has revealed that despite the introduction of an expansive supervisory system, there are still junctures at the micro-level where workers’ discretion impacts what clients receive and in a way becomes the policy (Lipsky, 1980). While workers recounted challenges outside of their control in providing broader parent support, their ability to provide skills and support to parenting was delimited only by their supervisors, and their clients’ willingness to engage. Hence, they prioritised clients, but not before trying to engage them over a prolonged period of time.

7.3. Workload and street-level behaviour
The second client-related factor of the three in the framework being applied in this study is workload. For Jewell and Glaser, workload refers “to the demands that occur on a regular basis for workers based on the regulations they are required to apply and the case needs that arise. [It] encompasses not only the number of cases but also the kind of tasks and decisions each case requires” (Jewell and Glaser, 2006, p.341).

In the implementation of activation policy in California, in both study settings the authors found that the workload of case workers was large and varied, with eligibility requirements and assessment processes increasing the workload attached to each case. High caseloads meant that workers
only focused on the core aspects of their work which related to assessment and form completion (and even then with difficulty), with little time to undertake non-core tasks such as engaging with service users about wider aspects of gaining employment. Constant changes to regulations tended to reinforce this form filling approach (Jewell and Glaser, 2006, p.344, 352).

In Lipsky’s work, high workloads are a fundamental characteristic of street-level bureaucracies and his view on them is fatalistic: workers will inevitably be overburdened by high caseloads and the psychological distress it causes. In response, workers develop a range of coping mechanisms to alleviate themselves mentally and physically from the demands of the work: they cream; they become focused on client processing, resulting in a lower, standardised form of service for all clients; they selectively chose easier cases; they refer on; they reject personal responsibility for work; they ration services and resources.

In their analysis of street-level work, Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2000; 2003) identify that workload is a factor in both the state-agent and citizen-agent narratives. However, in what they term the scholarly view of street-level behaviour – the state-agent narrative – decisions are taken which serve the interest of the worker, broadly as outlined in Lipsky above. In the counter narrative – the citizen-agent narrative – workload is dependent on the views workers have about their clients. Workers are willing to do much more than is required by rules and regulations to meet specific client needs, but are limited by pragmatism, realism and the moral judgements they make about their clients and how deserving or otherwise they may be. If clients are deemed to be undeserving, workers will use strict interpretations of programme rules to punish clients (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2000; 2003).

Much of the published literature on street-level behaviour takes Lipksy’s premise of excessive workloads – and their resultant production of coping mechanisms - as a given. Various mechanisms used to cope with high
workloads are identified (Brodkin, 1997; 2008; Jewell, 2007; Smith and Donovan, 2003). Other research pointed to the perception of excessive workload as having an important influence on the use of coping mechanisms (Winter, 2002), echoing Lipsky’s comment that even if workloads were reduced to manageable level, the psychological sense of being overburdened would still result in coping strategies. Tummers et al. (2015) identified that excessive workload produced three families of coping: moving towards clients; moving away from clients; and moving against clients. While their research highlighted that workers tended to move towards families in coping with workload, this was not always the case.

7.3.1. Programme-specific tasks and workload
Workers reported that providing support to parents and families using Mol an Óige required them to undertake a number of tasks relating to each case which was not a feature of their work before. First and foremost amongst these was the work involved in the task of familiarising themselves with elements of the approach. While training related to Mol an Óige was provided, as reported it did not focus sufficiently on the process of implementation but rather on the skills embodied in the approach. In this regard, a number of workers reported actually developing their own resources to support their work. In the main, these resources were effectively translations of programme rules and regulations which were required to be administered to service users – writing up their own notebooks, reminders and memos.

While all supervisors spoke positively about the programme as a way of delivering family support, the sense of needing to get this right imbued many of their comments about early implementation. For example:

I’m clear that this is what Mol an Óige says and I expect you to be clear about what you do with it, and sometimes I think that caused tensions [......]. I myself might have been a bit rough around the edges and may have felt a bit under pressure myself to ensure that I
was doing what I was supposed to be doing. That generated tension and work pressures. (SP 5)

In the main, this aspect of bureaucratic workload was a temporary one and was devised as a personal strategy to come to terms with the challenge the programme presented to their practice. In short, they developed their own ways of coping with this aspect of their work.

The Mol an Óige approach required supervisors to reduce the number of cases which each worker had responsibility for, but required workers to increase the level of intensity with each parent and family worked with. Survey data indicated that workers’ perceptions of their organisation taking steps to control their caseload increased between baseline and follow-up (Figure 26). While 50% (n = 11) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that “the agency tries to ensure that I do not have too many cases” at baseline, 64% (n = 14) agreed or strongly agreed at follow-up. While 23% (n = 5) disagreed or strongly disagreed at baseline, only 5% (n = 1) did so at follow-up. A Mann-Whitney U test revealed no statistically significant difference between baseline (Md = 3.5, n = 22) and follow-up (Md = 4, n = 21), U = 160.5, z = -1.846, p = .065, r = .28. However, it is noticeable that this difference approached significance at p = .05.

Figure 26: Baseline and follow-up scores on agency control over caseload
The impact of the reduction in the number of cases each worker was responsible for was evident in workers’ accounts of their practice, as was the increase in intensity. While on one level the smaller number of cases resulted in less communication with families, the required increase in intensity tended to bring additional workload pressures associated with a more structured approach to supporting parents and families. For example, trying to work the full ecology of parenting resulted in workers engaging with certain professionals and in certain domains to a greater degree than before. Teachers were an example often cited in the interviews.

Workers spoke about the engagement process as a time consuming, demanding but a necessary aspect of their work with families. Despite the vast majority of families desiring the support from the service, building relationships with parents and, where relevant, young people was often a long process, sometimes taking weeks to complete. The need to engage at the family’s level, so as to facilitate the development of trust in the worker by the family, was viewed as an important predictor of a successful outcome for parents. Hence, this was an essential part of the workload in each and every case which supervisors in particular looked out for. As SP 4 noted:

You build up a relationship that you know they’re going to value and you know that will be meaningful to them in order for you to progress the work. So you’re looking for that always [as a supervisor….]. (SP 4)

Preparing for cases, visits to homes and general planning and recording, was a large part which was not perceived as a major aspect of worker’s pre Mol an Óige practice. While this was viewed strongly as a positive aspect of their work and gave structure to it, it was also very time-consuming. Many workers reported that in trying to ensure that families received a natural, and not robotic, service, they spent more time planning what they were going to do with families than previously. This was a notable increase in the workload required in every individual case. For example:
I suppose we’d spend a fair amount of time, as I said, preparing for families, like we’d put in a good bit of time doing that [...]. The amount of time it takes to actually prepare to meet a family, because when we go in there, it always seems so down to earth and it just flows, but a lot of time goes into preparing that. (SL 6)

The increase in this particular aspect of the workload was also detected in survey data. Baseline data indicated that workers undertook an average of four hours of planning work for their cases prior to Mol an Óige being introduced; however, at follow-up, this had risen by 50% to six hours. More notable here is the change in mode, with the most entered value for planning at follow-up being eight hours, compared to a baseline value of four hours (see Figure 27 below). Delivering parent and family support through Mol an Óige contributed significantly to particular aspects of street-level workers’ workload, while reducing their caseload.

**Figure 27: Baseline and follow-up mean, median and mode scores on hours spent planning per week**

![Bar chart showing differences in planning hours between baseline and follow-up](chart.png)

Related to this is the increased amount of paperwork which workers were required to undertake. The assessments were a particular aspect of this paperwork. While previous practice included the use of assessments there was no stipulation that workers use them to inform further service planning and development. However, with the introduction of Mol an Óige, and its accompanying supervision and file audit elements, workers were required to not only administer the assessment tools but use them to
inform planning for and engagement with families. This often involved an additional visit to families to discuss what the assessment process found. Notwithstanding the issues of control in the assessment process mentioned above, the timing of this work was very much dependent on the nature of each individual case. Some families were willing to engage in the assessment process almost immediately, while others needed longer to build up trust with workers and discuss the issues which featured in the assessment tools.

The demands of linking assessment tools to the development of family service plans was a common feature of implementation remarked upon by workers. Together, the assessments, development process for plans and the revision of these plans as work progressed with families was also deemed to contribute significantly to their increased workload. This increase in administrative work was a strong finding in the interview data. The comments of both SL 11 and SL 22 below are indicative of the tone of the workers’ perceptions of the tasks required to implement the programme. For a number of workers, the administration side often suffered in response to the desire and need to work directly with families:

You try to do the files after you come in from a visit, but that depends, sometimes you’re so whacked from [the work], so emotionally drained, it’s like, “oh god, I can’t even go in to type that up”, it’s too much, you need to process it a little bit. That is the hardest thing, is to fit the admin in. I’d work with families all week long, all month long, but the admin side is a..., cause there is a lot of detail in it, and you try to be as brief as possible, but there’s a lot required in it. That sometimes maybe goes a little bit amiss. (SL 11)

Because we had fewer cases and we could get, we could tick all the boxes, we could make sure we met everyone, liaise with everyone, do more for them. So, in some respects that was good[...]. The other side of it is it really added up on our admin. (SL 22)

Survey data indicated the rise in administration and recording of work pre and post Mol an Óige. At baseline, workers reported spending a median value of four hours per week recording their work, with a mode value of
five hours. At follow-up, the median value had doubled to eight hours, with the mode value also rising to eight hours (see Figure 28 below).

**Figure 28: Baseline and follow-up mean, median and mode scores on hours spent recording work per week**

![Chart showing baseline and follow-up means, medians, and modes for hours spent recording work per week.](chart)

However, in considering all these aspects of the work as essential tasks, and the potential for them to reduce their direct contact time with families (see data under client contact factor below in section 7.4), workers were clear that such processes actually increased their ability to meet the needs of families and support parents. Workers rated the planning and administrative processes of their practice very positively. They provided structure, and a mechanism to track progress towards the achievement of family outcomes:

For me the biggest impact is putting a structure on what we do, seeing the differences, seeing the family service plan on paper. You look back after 6 months or a year working with the family, you see it’s all mapped. (SL 17)

The data here suggests that, while Mol an Óige workers were not inundated with cases, they were busy administering the larger workload of each case. The data suggests that they were motivated to get the process right for themselves and for families, that they were conscientious to work the approach for the betterment of families. This is a different aspect of street-level work than appears in Lipsky’s overburdened scenario. Akin to
Tummers et al., (2015), workers here take actions which are broadly in the interests of the clients. While developing their own ways of implementing Mol an Óige could be viewed as an element of case processing, it could be equally viewed as workers using their own personal resources to provide parenting support in their work. Ultimately they are using their own energy and resources to work for the client.

7.3.2. Street-level behaviour, case specificity and worker activity

Beyond these requirements of the approach, workers’ accounts of their workload varied dependent on the particularities of each case, each family’s needs being the specific goals set out for the work. This was an aspect of the workers’ workload which was appreciated by supervisors as well. While cases shared similar referral reasons, the particularities of each case, as well as the characteristics of workers and parents themselves, often determined the kinds of tasks in each worker’s workload, and what was actually done. As outlined in chapter two, provision of parenting and parent support can involve the supply of a range of social supports. These supports are practical; esteem; advice; and emotional. The Mol an Óige approach is no different in this regard. It emphasises the provision of a range of resources through the worker to the client to meet the client’s specific aims in using the service. All these aims relate to the goals of the family as defined.

In meeting these wider needs of parents, workers provided support to them in a number of ways, going beyond the bounds of the approach’s rules and regulations. Workers often provided a range of concrete supports for families, such as cooking, cleaning, providing lifts for family members, collecting children from school, providing financial and/or other material resources, help with moving house, taking children out on activities, and support with particular family occasions, for example funerals or communions. Accounts by workers included being available over the weekends to families, being in family homes on Sunday.
afternoons, early mornings and late evenings. It involved help with bedtime routines, morning routines, school attendance, or generally helping parents feel in control in the home.

However, the extent of workload demands varied dependent on the worker perceiving themselves as a teacher, or teacher and doer. These positions are reminiscent of the state-agent/citizen-agent dichotomy of workers as described in chapter six (section 6.2.). For some workers, providing parenting skills in the home with parents was the entire gamut of the work involved in certain cases. A small number of workers were adamant that, as a result of Mol an Óige, their work was simply to teach and model strategies to address family behaviour in the narrow sense. This was a task which all workers were required to implement and it contributed to their sense of identity of worker-as-teacher. But for some, this was the extent of their role. While they may have found themselves providing practical support in a limited number of cases, they did not see it as contributing to the process of supporting parents in a family support-orientated way. As SL 27 identified:

A lot of my work is about sitting, listening. Having the cup of tea, understanding. Giving them that support, reframing stuff for them. That’s what I’m there to do. I’m not actually there to do physical tasks around their home. Now if someone says “hold the ladder” or asks “pick up the baby” I will, but that’s not actually doing anything. (SL 27)

Even where family needs extended beyond the family home, these workers tended to adopt a narrow, teaching or state-agent role. For example, where child-related goals were prominent in a family plan, workers modelled engagement with school principals or teachers rather than actually doing the negotiation as such with these professionals. Where financial needs were identified, these workers sourced the number of the Community Welfare Officer, rather than engage with the service itself for the benefit of the parent. Engaging with the children in the home was
predominantly for the purpose of modelling and teaching parents, rather than providing general support for them, or working solely with children:

Sometimes I’d do one-to-one pieces with children around specific difficulties that they are having […] but it would include the parent, not always together but I’d be very much showing the parent and making suggestions to the parent about what they need to be doing at home with the child or the behaviours that need to be changed. (SL 18)

Although these workers could not be seen as coping in the classic street-level sense, they do display certain coping strategies (Tummers et al., 2015). They move away from clients in adopting more stringent street-level characteristics in some ways. They ration certain aspects of what they do. But this is not in the sense of avoiding meaningful action, but rather from a belief that it is family support. Simply providing everything for the family is not.

However, the workload of other workers tended to be defined by broader conceptualisations of their roles vis-a-vis the citizen-agent narrative of Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003), or moving towards clients (Tummers et al., 2015). In such cases, while workers recognised and described their teaching roles as part of the process of providing support, they also recognised that this was only part of what they had to do to meet the needs of parents. Working with children served the function of addressing goals in the family plan, but also was for the purposes of engaging the children themselves. Such work often involved working in schools with children and education professionals, without parents but with their support. In many instances, these workers spoke of the requirement of cases often specifically not to teach, but provide general support in the form of counselling, or more generally meeting the broader, ecological needs of parents themselves. For example:

Or sometimes you go in there and you are planning to talk to them about parenting say, about how to get Johnny to bed, or out of bed and up for school, and they’re thinking “I’ve seven loads of washing to do and the washing machine is broke, I’ve six kids here, would
you ever get out of the house”. You have to meet the need. “Let’s get a quote, let’s head down to the Vincent de Paul, let’s try and get you a washing machine”. You have to park some things, you have to help. (SL 3)

I always say to families “this is about making your life easier” so anything you can do to make life a little bit easier for a family and to help them [...] I don’t think dropping a young person down to soccer is [the Mol an Óige way] but it is a family support thing. Or bringing a mother up to the women’s refuge, that’s family support thing, but its’ not necessarily Mol an Óige. (SL 12)

As illustrated in these quotes, these workers tended to display a willingness to go beyond the teaching confines of the model and do whatever was needed to meet the needs of families. Hence a broad array of tasks was identified depending on the needs of each case. While these workers did not lose sight of their teaching roles, it was not solely what defined them. They bend the rules regarding a strict interpretation of the teaching model to help parents and families in broader ways.

However, the extent of workload was also influenced by two other factors: the willingness of families to take on the tasks of workers; and the willingness of other professionals in certain circumstances to aid workers in meeting the broader needs of parents.

### 7.3.3. Workload and the role of families

Many workers commented that, in providing support to parents, either in the narrow sense of being teachers, or in the broader sense of being teachers and doers, the ultimate aim of the work was to make themselves no longer required. While the family determined the particularities of each case through their issues, workers perceived that if the programme was to be implemented correctly, and parents and families supported more generally, parents had to increasingly take on more of the responsibility for the work involved each week from the worker. The empowering nature of family support was viewed as critical to Mol an Óige, and ultimately the success of the support provided. Workers fostered greater responsibility through teaching, supporting, role-playing and observing. For many
workers, it was a stronger form of doing family support work as it challenged to a greater extent some families’ desire to be passive recipients of services. Its implementation served to reduce the workload of workers through decreasing dependency and increasing the resilience of families, so long as they were willing and motivated to take on the work. Workers thus spoke of families moving from being passive to active, and then from active to independent of the service. While some workers saw the family being centrally involved from the outset through the identification of goals and the subsequent development of family service plans, the majority saw the middle phase of the programme as providing the opportunity for families to become directly involved in the delivery of the service itself. In this regard, the programme was viewed as being more partnership-based than workers’ previous experiences. As SL 26 outlined:

I would say it’s a lot more working in partnership, looking for their input, they’re active. We look at the families as experts in the sense that they know their own family best so we’re not coming in telling them what they’ve to do. We’re trying to offer suggestions and support and trying to provide different alternatives to things that haven’t been working well for them but they’d be seen as very much active and very much a resource for their own information and family history and patterns of activity [...]. Much more active yeah. (SL 26)

Meeting families at their level and working at their pace was viewed as important in fostering a climate of partnership and engendering a greater role for families ultimately in the implementation process. However, challenging families about their behaviour, and their unwillingness to take on the Mol an Óige approach, was often a fine line which workers sometimes, crossed with the result that families withdrew from the service. This was characterised by families rejecting the programme’s non-traditional model of service delivery, an unwillingness to accept that workers would not be willing to do all aspects of the programme ‘for’ the family. As SL 1 commented about one of their families:

The next day I received a text from her saying she was not going to engage with me, she no longer wanted me to make contact with
her, she didn’t like the way that I spoke down to her in the meeting. Now I hadn’t felt I did that but again I think part of it was the guilt herself, she didn’t like to be challenged [about her role in this.....]. You’re there to “provide a service” [was her view]. (SL 1)

The comments of SL 23 also illustrate this point:

The empowerment thing, but I think with this its only in later years we have really stood back, I think naively in the beginning you do family support, you do all things for everybody and you throw things on people[...but] only in the latter years we have named it and said, “no, we are not doing them any favours here, making them dependant on us”. [.....you say to the parent] “you know this, you can do this, you are a good mother, trust yourself, stop doubting yourself”. You know, “get up and ring somebody, where is the phone”. And you know what I mean, you are working more to say “you are capable”. (SL 23)

The potential for disempowerment of families was also a feature of supervisors’ comments on the nature of workers’ engagement and activity in homes. All supervisors spoke of the family being a resource in the process of implementation; that they were required to contribute increasingly so as to remove the need for the worker to be in the home. As one supervisor put it, “so maybe it’s 70-30 initially, get back to 50-50, the family being able to be 90, 100% without you. Your role becomes less” (SP 7). All supervisors thus spoke of the need to ensure that workers were not disempowering families by doing too much, that families had a role in implementing Mol an Óige through taking on their own activities and empowering themselves. For example:

I suppose that’s the good thing as well is that if you are, if you find a worker is going in there and they are actually doing it for them all the time, that is fine for the first week or two, you know, your role, you are giving them ideas, but if you are not getting to the stage where you see a worker prompting and making an effort, you are totally disempowering them. (SP 6)

Here, the data suggests that workers moved against particular forms of client. They rigidly followed what they saw to be the rules of family support in challenging parents to take on more responsibility in their parenting roles. Data from case files indicated that where cases were closed
unsuccessfully, the main reason cited was that parents were unwilling to engage. However, as the outline of the approach in chapter five and the quote from the supervisor above suggests, this did not occur immediately. All families were worked with and given a period of time to be ‘passive’ recipients before more was expected of them. If they chose not to cooperate after that, the workers began to move against them, by resisting to do things and by sanctioning them for not engaging and stating that it was up to them, the parents, to get involved (Smith and Donavan, 2003). In many ways, they were teaching the client role through such a process (Lipsky, 1980).

7.3.4. Workload and interagency working
For some workers, engaging schools was difficult given the previous history some families had had with teachers and principals. Trying to engineer a young person’s re-entry to school after a suspension or expulsion, or ensuring that a young person was staying calm in school, was a challenging, and time-consuming aspect of their work, but viewed as an essential one: it related to family-specific goals and was ultimately helping parents. However, the stigma attached with accessing family support services was deemed to complicate the achievement of this task in certain cases. A number of workers identified the ethos of individual schools as a determining factor in their ability to work at this level. For example:

“It depends on the school. Some schools have no problem allowing you to meet a kid in the school, if the parents are ok with it first. Some schools have absolutely no problem with you, other schools kind of don’t really want it happening in their school, they don’t want to be seen as having kids in their school that need, whatever, us! It just depends on the school, to be honest. (SL 8)"

Many workers engaged with professionals as part of their workload on individual cases, with many cases requiring significant amounts of collaboration with other professionals. In a small number of cases workers engaged with medical professionals in the provision of support to parents with serious medical conditions requiring in-home support. While some
workers did not administer medical treatment per se, they did work with the visiting doctor/nurse to provide peripheral support to the parents, mainly in the form of working with the child. They kept these other professionals informed of their own work, or engaged with professionals consciously to coordinate support for families. This was similar where cases were open to social work. Such cases demanded additional tasks to be undertaken, mainly in the form of meeting social workers at particular times, as well as preparing inputs for reports for their supervisors and social workers to present to court. More generally, a whole range of professionals were engaged with by workers to meet the needs of parents.

7.3.5. Factor summary

The Jewell and Glaser framework suggests that the workload of street-level bureaucrats is an important determinant of whether policy will be implemented and goals achieved. In traditional street-level analysis, bureaucrats are overburdened with excessive caseloads and insufficient resources. As a result, workers take short cuts, only focus on what has to get done, develop a mechanism to provide all clients with some level of service, favour some clients over others and punish those who do not conform.

In Jewell and Glaser’s work, excessive workloads meant that workers tended to focus on form filling as the core work, with little time to undertake non-core tasks such as engaging service users about wider aspects of gaining employment. In this study, while workers’ caseloads were not high, the amount of work involved increased. Paperwork, in the form of assessments, family plans and associated file work all increased with the adoption of Mol an Óige. However, workload tended to be determined by the nature of the client worked with, their needs and the role of the worker. While some workers clearly extended themselves for families in any way they could, others rigidly stuck to the teaching aspect of the model. All workers expected families to become part of the implementation process, sooner rather than later, as part of the
empowering aspect of family support. Those who didn’t slowly had support withdrawn from them.

While much has been written about coping in response to excessive workloads, coping strategies could also be used simply as a response to the uncertainty of individual situations. Many workers in this study moved towards clients, through rule bending and using their own resources, being citizen-agents working for deserving clients. Others, however, moved against those who refused to engage, or who only engaged to a limited extent. When this occurred, it was largely as a result of workers’ frustrations at families not wanting to participate or taking responsibility. The uncertainty this created for workers in the context of their family support reference frame – especially of empowering families and intervening minimally – was responded to by challenging families and ultimately closing cases.

7.4. Client contact and street-level behaviour in Mol an Óige

The factor client contact refers to the frequency, amount of time and quality of contact or interaction between the worker and the service user. In Jewell and Glaser’s framework, where clients receive benefits for a prolonged period of time, the frequency and regularity of client-worker interaction becomes an important focal point in understanding street-level behaviour. Of note here in their definition of the factor is the role of place in the analysis of interaction, as well as their emphasis on the quality of the interaction (Jewell and Glaser, 2006, p. 341). Jewell and Glaser found that the public nature of the office, the high number of clients and the short, infrequent meetings all combined to prevent attaining the goal of client employment.

Lipsky (1980) characterises clients of street-level bureaucracies as non-voluntary in one of two ways. They are actually non-voluntary (as in the case of prisoners), or are effectively so due to the agency being the only
service provider and/or the clients being unable to afford private provision. Although not powerless, they are at a distinct disadvantage compared to the street-level bureaucrat. While they have resources (time, empathy for the workers’ unmanageable workload, gratitude for help received), the worker can control them in a number of ways, including through the provision of benefits and sanctions (real and psychological), through controlling the interaction and through teaching the client role. As such, the client is passive.

Such passiveness is challenged by recent street-level thinking which suggests that, like the worker-supervisor beforehand, the worker-client may not be in conflict and may actually share the same goals resulting from service interaction. Nielsen (2006) argues that attention needs to be paid to how goals are constructed and power plays out. The concept of co-production, extends the role of the client by suggesting that, while not necessarily an equal partner, they play a strong role in the implementation and production process. This is particularly the case where empowerment is a goal of the service exchange and tailor-made responses are characteristics of what is produced (Osborne and Strokosch, 2013).

7.4.1. The environment of worker-client interaction
Working in a Mol an Óige way required workers to engage with parents and families in the family home and in an individualised manner. In this way, the organisational context in which the programme was implemented by workers was different to that of other street-level workers implementing programmes, both in social care settings and elsewhere. The workers in this study were broadly of the view that working in family homes was a positive thing and contributed to the successful provision of support, as opposed to working in an agency office or similar location. This view was proffered for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the nature of the work and the issues it aimed to address for families were deemed to be deeply personal in many instances. The in-
home, individual nature of their work, as opposed to formalised, sessional group work of a parenting programme for example, was a specific attraction for some families. It also permitted support to be provided in a manner which addressed the challenges to some clients of engaging at a group level, such as literacy. As SL 23 stated:

Our people not liking to come into groups, they just want the space at home [to discuss issues]. And then there would be a lot of literacy stuff and you can’t put those people into groups and it is not fair and people feel kind of stupid doing them then. Then a lot of problems would be coming up in the parenting that they don’t want to discuss in a group. So this allows the individual, in the home, you know, to discuss them. (SL 23)

I suppose in-home work is such a huge part of it, because a parent feels so much more comfortable in their own home, the emphasis on building relationships with the family, between the family and us; it’s very flexible, needs led and sort of individualised in that sense. (SL 6)

The in-home nature of their work was also viewed as being closely aligned to the family support principle of empowerment. Providing a service which supported families in their own homes was viewed as being central to workers’ identity as family support workers, as empowering families to address their own issues in their own place at their own pace. That support provided in this context was deemed to contribute to greater buy-in from families, facilitated better engagement and increased the likelihood of achieving goals. For example:

The poster I gave to [two children], their big green poster that says “did you do your times tables and pack your bag”, it’s at the bottom of their stairs. When I meet them in [a local community centre] I can’t go out and stand in the hall and go, “come here lads, do you want me to change anything about it?” Now we can still talk about it and visualise it and [they] know what I’m talking about but that just, that adds to it. It’s just more real [in the home]. (SL 7)

In a small number of cases, workers highlighted that families did not want the service in the home, but rather desired to come to the service centre
itself. In these instances, workers felt parents, despite agreeing to the nature of the support, worried about them coming into their home and assessing the state of it. Despite this, workers did agree to work with families outside the home. This applied both to families who were engaged with social work as well as those with lesser needs. As one supervisor commented:

They’ll have presented at the office but they’d be slow for you to get into the family home. So you have to really do a dance with that. For some, it is easier for them to come to an office, so you just have to make that call and go with it (SP 1).

While Lipsky (1980) argued that workers structured the context of the interaction, these data suggests the opposite to be the case. That families could receive support in their own home was viewed as a positive for families by workers; however, parents could also resist and have support provided outside of the home. In determining the location of where the service was provided, families exerted influence over the implementation process in a manner not envisaged by Lipsky (1980).

In engaging parents in their own homes, workers tended to emphasise families as the experts in resolving their own issues. In this regard, as under workload above, workers spoke of a clear role for families in the delivery of the service. While engagement activities were viewed as a mainstay of work in fostering participation by parents, they were also perceived as contributing to the service environment where workers could challenge families if so required about particular behaviours, and thus prompt them to take on the work required of them in the service.

The development and maintenance of trust and the building of a strong relationship with families was perceived by many workers as contributing to a positive atmosphere in undertaking the work. Workers spoke of this again being an element of partnership with families, of them facilitating families to take ownership of the work and ultimately to not need the workers’ support in the future. Workers thus described the emergence of
reciprocal relationships between them and parents. In so doing, empathising with parents’ issues and validating their situations were viewed as important steps in creating a positive atmosphere, forging good relationships and motivating parents to engage. For example:

“I’ve seen worse than you, I’ve seen people with less problems than you, you will come through it if you’re willing to change, take on board these skills”. So there’s a little bit of empathy. I suppose as a worker I do listen a lot and sometimes if you validate it, you know, it’ll help. (SL 3)

7.4.2. Amount of contact with clients
Survey data provide useful information on the impact of the programme on client contact by workers. At baseline, mean values of direct work with families per week was reported to be 15.09 hours, with a median value of 12 hours. However, at follow-up, both these values fell, with mean values being 12.24 hours, and the median value being 11 hours (see Figure 29).

While it is notable that the median values dropped slightly during implementation of Mol an Óige, the N values also need to be considered here. The nature of additional, non-programmatic workload for some workers impacted on their ability to implement the programme and caused a reduction in their direct work in this programme. This is more clearly
stated when the mode values of client contact outlined between baseline and follow-up are considered. At baseline, values for direct work undertaken ranged from five hours to 35 hours per worker. There was one mode value: three hours ($n = 3$). However, in the follow-up data, the range was far more constricted, being between two hours and 24 hours. Here there was also only one mode value, six hours ($n = 3$). However, eight workers identified themselves as engaging directly with clients for between 14 and 22 hours. It is clear that there was great variation in the amount of direct work undertaken by workers in the programme each week.

7.4.3. Frequency and regularity of contact with clients

Frequency of contact was also determined by the parents. Parents identified the most suitable times for workers to visit, and how often in a week each visited. While worker availability played a role, ultimately all were aware that parents (as well as young people where worked with) were the final arbiters of contact. Although most families reportedly welcomed all the support they could get, in some situations, families were very clear about the frequency with which they would engage. For example:

A lot of families you might be going out four or five times a week. But then I have another family that I can only get out to once a week, that’s all they’ll let me, that’s it (SL 14).

Regularity of contact was also discussed by workers and supervisors. Workers commented that, given the teaching nature of the approach, regular contact was essential with families. While contact could vary within a week, contact at least once a week was deemed essential for skills to be imparted to families and used in the family home. Thus, workers tended to establish a routine of meeting with families, on particular days of the week. While for a small number of workers, the part-time nature of their employment required this, for others such regular appointments made it easier to engage with families. Supervisors also emphasised
regularity of contact as a factor which would guide part of their monitoring role of workers.

Qualitative data revealed that frequency of contact with clients tended to be mediated by two key factors. The first related to the particular phase or stage of the process. When service provision was initiated, workers reported meeting with families on average once a week. Workers spoke of the need at this stage not to be too overbearing with clients. In many cases, they spoke of the need to let parents and families talk about their own issues. The challenging and upsetting nature of many of these issues were cited by workers as influences on the frequency of contact with families. The assessment process was also viewed as challenging for some families. Workers cited the invasive nature of some parts of the assessment process as being enough for families to contend with in a week.

However, as goals were identified and the first iteration of the family plan emerged, all workers reported that frequency of contact increased. In numerous cases spoken about by workers, being in family homes three to five times a week was not uncommon. The nature and uniqueness of the goals which informed the family plan played a role in determining when workers visited family homes. For example, goals relating to young people and school attendance were common. In such cases, workers reported being in homes early in the morning to support the parents in getting children up for school and visiting homes again in the evening to support parents in engaging with their children about their school day. These visits also served to provide direct support to parents, with workers often visiting before children arrived home from school to work with parents alone, providing various forms of social support. Visits to family homes late in the evening were not uncommon either. Weekend visits were also mentioned in a small number of cases, and were justified on the basis of family need and personal worker motivation.
At the individual case level, workers viewed the amount of contact they had per case per week as largely being down to the will of each family and the stage of the process. Many families were reported to engage with workers for anything between one and three hours per visit. While some parents were more than willing to receive whatever support they could get from workers, workers also commented on the ability of some families to limit the amount of time they spend in homes. Again, the voluntary engagement of families was a significant factor here, as was the nature of the work involved:

Two and a half hours, with the skills especially. You go in, catch up, “what has happened? Did you try those skills last week?” There might be assigned tasks. “How did they go?” and me feeding back about it. [.....] And then me getting into what I need to get into this week, and coming to an agreement about what’ll be done. (SL 11)

The control exercised by families over the process was highlighted, but also was the ability of families to sustain long sessions due to whatever may be going on in their life at that time. The comments of SL 24 highlight this issue:

Can depend on the chaos in the family. Some families, it can be at least two hours, two and a half hours every visit. Another family, I’m lucky to get in for forty minutes. Another again, an hour, that’s all their able to manage at that point in their life. So, it’s different. (SL24)

7.4.4. Factor summary
That workers spent significant amounts of time with parents and families when delivering Mol an Óige in notable and in sharp contrast to the fleeting meetings which were a feature of Jewell and Glaser’s (2006) research. More specifically, in thinking about the nature of worker-client interaction, it is clear that there is a lot different to the activation offices of western California. Mol an Óige is a voluntary enterprise at surface level. While there are elements of implicit compulsion in the absence of alternatives, for most who engage with these workers they do so out of an attempt to improve their home lives. They seek the support, the help and
the advice of family support workers. In so doing, according to Whitaker (1980), they have initiated a process of co-production. On a deeper level, the type of interaction which characterises Mol an Óige is reflective of consumer co-production (Osborne and Stokosch, 2013). The aim centres on engaging the consumer and balancing expectations, ultimately leading to service user empowerment.

Nielsen (2006) encouraged the researcher to focus on the areas of power and control in thinking about co-production and policy implementation. In Mol an Óige, the experience is similar to van Berkel (2011). While workers bring their skills and resources to the exchange, parents bring a host of information essential to the production of the service. They also provide other resources (the location in most cases), as well as an ability to engage, to negotiate, to enter into dialogue with workers (Needham, 2009). The will of the parent, and the particularities of their case serve to shape the exchange. Their ability to engage, both per visit and per week, also influences the service being provided. Their control over the location and their inputs to the assessment and planning process, while dominant, do serve to shape what comes next. The process of Mol an Óige is the mutual adjustment of Whitaker (1980), not necessarily a partnership of equals, but an exchange between two willing individuals.

7.5. Conclusion
This chapter has examined the role of three factors in the provision of parenting support: authority; client contact; and workload. Examining each of them individually in the context of supporting parents and families has produced some interesting findings, both in the context of the Jewell and Glaser (2006) data, and in the implementation of support to parents and families.

The factor authority effectively focuses the researcher’s eye on the power balance between worker and client, and to a lesser extent worker and supervisor. It concerns the ability of the worker to have an impact on
others, in this case the client. Jewell and Glaser (2006) found that the
workers in their study had relatively little authority. While they had control
over financial benefits, they had little control over anything else and were
detached from other aspects of the implementation process.

In this study, workers had more ability to influence and have an impact on
their clients. This was done through the formal aspects of Mol an Óige: the
assessment processes and the family plan, where workers had ultimate
power to decide on assessment scores and influence the goals of the family
plan. It was also done in other ways, however, such as deciding how to
respond to the needs of clients, such as in a narrow or broad manner, in
the resources they brought to the process, and in how they sanctioned
family. However, their power was bounded by the supervisor, who kept
ultimate control over whether families received the ultimate sanction for
not engaging: service withdrawal.

The focus on authority has served further to illuminate the importance of
role perception on the implementation of family and parenting support.
Workers’ exercise of power is largely determined by their sense of working
in a family support way or not, whether this be a narrow or broad
conceptualisation of what that involves. Bound up in this is the role of who
they work for, the client who ideally engages, moves from passive to active
and gets to a stage where no further support is needed. The role of the
client here is more than the passive recipient in Lipsky (1980), and Jewell
and Glaser (2006). They can bring empathy for a worker’s plight, and
gratitude and platitudes for the help received. However, in this policy
context, they are also are required to bring an eventual willingness to take
a role in the implementation process beyond simply receiving a service.
The authority of the worker was limited by their sense of what was
appropriate in family support. And in these cases, supplanting the parental
role continuously was not within the bounds of their understanding of their
role, and the exercise of the power in that role.
Examining *client contact* and *workload*, the second and third client factors serves to further enhance this position. In Jewell and Glaser, *workload* refers to the number of cases each worker is responsible for and the demands of each case. Although workers in this study were not overburdened like in traditional street-level bureaucracies with excessive caseloads, they did have high workloads resulting from the nature of Mol an Óige. Implementing this form of family support placed additional pressures on workers in bringing themselves up to speed as well as adhering to the requirements of the approach, which the supervisory regime, in the main, ensured.

Beyond this, workload was influence by the particular needs of each case and the willingness of parents to (eventually) get involved in the support process, to take on the skills and start using them. Workers tended to use coping strategies to varying degrees, to support clients through prioritising those who engaged, sometimes using personal resources to help them, and moving away from clients through rationing services, in the sense of what they were willing to do, and punishing them through rigid rule following (Lipsky, 1980; Tummers et al., 2015; Winter, 2002). While workers expected to do more at the beginning of the engagement, they expected parents to do more as the engagement progressed. They responded more positively to those who engaged. In such an exchange, both worker and client are bringing resources to the production process. They are co-producing the support that the client is accessing. They are being empowered through the worker.

The examination of *client contact* further illustrates the central role for clients in the provision of support as opposed to it just being a factor which mediates workers’ activities alone. *Client contact* refers to the amount of time and quality of interactions with clients. The data presented here suggested that these are elements which are firmly in the control of the client. While Mol an Óige is a home-based support initiative, clients can access it outside the home if they so wish. The voluntaristic nature of the
engagement also allows the client to set when and how often the engagement should occur, implicitly through their needs and capacity to engage with the work, and explicitly through identifying times for engagement. The data here suggested that workers felt that parents were welcoming of their role in the home, although there were differences to the extent which they provided face-to-face contact with families in a week.

Client contact also involves an assessment of the nature of the contact between worker and client. Workers spoke of families being their own experts, and more generally about empowering families in a family support way. The process of engagement sought to build up a relationship of trust and honesty (Dolan and Holt, 2010; Moran, Ghate and van der Merwe, 2004), positive overall but with the space for workers to challenge clients should they need to. Reciprocal relationships form where, in the words of Whitaker (1980, p.240) “the agent can supply encouragements, suggest options, illustrate techniques, and provide proper guidance and support, but the agent alone cannot bring about the change”. In forging a positive relationship, the basis for co-production of support to parents and families is established. As work progresses, it is built upon by both worker and client who bring different resources to the provision of support and influence it in different ways so as to co-produce it.

In summation, this chapter has presented and discussed findings in relation to a central sub-question in this study: what is the relationship between street-level bureaucratic behaviour and these three client-related factors when implementing parenting support? The findings suggest that the answer is one of interdependence, where each factor plays a role in coproducing the service that parents and families receive. How this plays out, and interacts with the other three factors in the framework examined in chapter six, will be outlined in the conclusion to the study.
Chapter Eight: Conclusion

8.1. Introduction
The development of the policy sciences as a distinct field of academic inquiry in the mid-20th century brought with it a growing interest in various aspects of the policy process, both as they were then known and subsequently identified. The growth of this field gave rise to, and was itself further nourished by, interest in social issues and policy responses across a range of disciplines beyond political science and public administration (Parsons, 1995). Researchers, who were more interested in the content of a particular policy or problem, developed an awareness and understanding of issues affecting the policy process, which impacted the problem or policy that was the focus of their work. Their research thus had a knock-on effect on the understanding of particular aspects of the policy process per se, in particular conditions. Such cross-pollination of ideas, exploration and learning led to the characterisation of policy analysis as a multidisciplinary endeavour and as something which is best served “by whatever appears appropriate to the circumstances of the time and the nature of the problem” (Wildavsky, 1979, p.15). It can perhaps be argued that such multidisciplinary endeavour in policy analysis is necessary or symbiotic: a particular social problem and a policy to address it can provide a testing ground to explore aspects of the process; at the same time policy frameworks and approaches can serve to enhance knowledge about aspects of a particular policy.

This study has primarily built on the work of policy analysts interested in the implementation of policy, but has also been concerned with a particular policy area. The overall aim has been to examine the role of street-level bureaucrats in implementing parenting and family support policy in Ireland. The core question which has driven this study has been:

*Is the Jewell and Glaser framework useful in exploring the impact of organisational context on street-level bureaucratic behaviour when*
an ambiguous policy - namely family and parenting support - is being implemented in an Irish context?

As the question suggests, the primary purpose of the study has been to examine the utility of a particular framework in exploring street-level behaviour when a policy is being implemented. The Jewell and Glaser (2006) framework, derived inductively from an analysis of the implementation of employment activation policies in California in the United States, was previously used only in the analysis of activation policies in other countries, and to varying degrees (Van Berkel, Van der Aa and Van Gestel, 2010; Thoren, 2008). In this research I wanted to take up the challenge laid down by the framework’s authors, to test it in different contexts, geographically, administratively and in a policy sense. In examining the usefulness of the framework, for the purposes of the study I split it into two sets of factors: one relating to worker-organisation interaction; and the other relating to worker-client interaction.

The utility of the framework was examined through the prism of parenting and family support policy in Ireland. Depicted as an ambiguous policy, lacking any clear policy goals despite increasing state funding and nationwide service provision, family and parenting support provided a very different policy context to employment activation to examine how useful the framework was in exploring street-level behaviour. However, this policy case study was chosen for another reason. Its ambiguity offered an opportunity to explore what such a policy looked like on the ground, when being delivered by family support workers in the absence of any clear policy goals. Such exploration was a secondary purpose of the research.

A case study involving a multiphase concurrent or parallel mixed methods research design was used for two reasons: firstly because of its ability to robustly answer the research question through incorporating different research methods, both quantitative and qualitative; and secondly, because it was a pragmatic approach to research design and data collection.
given that the study was grounded in an evaluation. While much of the
data collection approach was predetermined by the evaluation, from a
purely pragmatic sense it offered a suitable vehicle to answer the core
research question, namely to test the framework. Pragmatism is often a
characteristic of mixed methods research (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002).

As is the case with much street-level research (Brodkin, 2003; Hill and
Hupe, 2009), qualitative methods dominated the research process. In this
case, semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection method.
Interviews permitted a detailed exploration and analysis of both workers’
and supervisors’ perspectives on street-level work. As outlined in chapters
six and seven, this method revealed insights into the role of the framework
factors as defined by Jewell and Glaser in the activities of family support
workers and supported the conclusions presented here. Analysis of the
policy context in Ireland provided an account of how parenting support,
and more broadly family support, is ambiguous, as outlined by Matland
(1995) and Rainey and Jung (2010). This, in turn, led to the exploration of
the local policy context and development of the Mol an Óige approach
detailed in chapter five, the particular way of doing family and parenting
support amongst the services which constituted the case study for this
research. Interviews with key informants involved in bringing Mol an Óige
to these services depicted a context where local decision makers promoted
the development of a particular way of doing family and parent support –
Mol an Óige. File analysis revealed that workers engaged with clients –
parents and children – towards the achievement of a wide range of goals
which were all construed as doing family support and supporting parents.

The multiphase element of the research design was the administering of a
staff survey at two different time points: early in the implementation of the
Mol an Óige approach and again towards the end of the research and
concurrent with the interviews with family workers and their supervisors.
The primary aim of the survey data was to support triangulation with
findings emanating from the interviews and case file analysis. The
secondary position given to quantitative data in the study was partly derived from the evaluation beginning and thus the survey baseline being undertaken prior to initiation of this study, but also due to the primacy of qualitative approaches in street-level research.

There are a number of limitations to this study. As outlined in the third chapter, the research used a case study approach to explore the utility of the Jewell and Glaser framework. While there are limitations about the extent to which findings are generalisable across all contexts, the use of a typical (Yin, 2009) or exemplifying case (Bryman, 2001) does allow for the generation of knowledge about a theory or framework being used and the policy context in which it is being examined. In this regard, what is termed analytical generalisation, the study generates learning about the utility of a framework in the Irish case which can inform further street-level analysis, and in a family and parenting support context which can lead to the generation of policy knowledge.

The second limitation concerns the absence of service user-related data. Many, although not all, street-level analyses of policy implementation rely to some extent on observational data of street-level practice. However, in this study it was not possible to collect any observational data despite my intentions. Consent from the families to observe workers engaging with them in their homes was not forthcoming. The presence of such data would have likely aided the analysis of service user factors in the framework and enhanced my understanding of the role of the families as co-producers of the implementation process. However, as Hunter and Ritchie (2007) and Fenwick (2011) have shown, co-production research which focuses on the views of professionals and their accounts of practice can provide important insights into the role of service users in the process. In addition, Tummers and Bekkers (2014) highlight the importance of workers’ perspectives in gaining an understanding of the “experienced reality” of street-level behaviour. These mitigating arguments are further
underpinned by the emphasis placed on the perspectives of workers in this study.

Thirdly, despite the small pool of informants involved in bringing Mol an Óige to Mayo and Roscommon, it was only possible to interview one senior manager responsible for its introduction and implementation. Had the opportunity arisen to interview both senior managers a more comprehensive picture of the local implementation context created by the ambiguous nature of family and parenting support policy could have been depicted. Finally, due to ethical considerations prompted by the small scale nature of the evaluation study, the conditions imposed by the Research Ethics Committee on the evaluation and thus this study meant it was not possible to identify workers from particular services. While this was a minor limitation given that the majority of workers were ultimately from one large organisation, the ability to explore the perspectives of workers from different organisations had the potential to enhance my understanding of street-level practice, of the power of organisations in shaping worker activity, and thus ultimately provide a greater test of the framework.

This final chapter summarises the evidence from the previous three chapters of the thesis. It reasserts how the ambiguous nature of family and parenting support policy in Ireland permits local, experimental implementation to occur. It then proceeds to make an overall assessment of the utility of the Jewell and Glaser framework in exploring street-level behaviour in the implementation of family and parenting support policy. The main contributions to knowledge are outlined before a number of implications for research, policy and practice arising from this study are set out.
8.2. The ambiguous nature of Irish family and parenting support policy: justifying street-level analysis

The Jewell and Glaser framework was developed inductively from analysing the implementation of activation policies. These policies had one clear, unambiguous goal: client employment. As outlined above, part of this research was to examine its usefulness where policy was more ambiguous. To do this, the meaning and nature of ambiguity regarding the policy process required examination before outlining how Irish family and parenting support policy was ambiguous.

As outlined in chapter two, section four, there is a limited literature on the nature of policy ambiguity. Rainey and Jung (2010) outlined that policy ambiguity exists where there is a lack of clarity regarding: the target specification (who is the policy for, and the quantity and quality of work towards the achievement of the policy goal); time specification (absence of clarity about short and long-term goals of a policy); and evaluability (absence of clarity about what a successful policy looks like on the ground). Matland (1995), in trying to determine appropriate models for implementation analysis, identified ambiguity as a political construct which emerges in the need to get particular policies passed. Ambiguous language can allow multiple interpretations. It can create buy-in from individuals and organisations who would feel threatened by and thus resist less ambiguous policies. Ambiguity can also arise regarding the means of a policy. Even where a policy is clear, the means by which it will be achieved are often less so. In working with such a policy, Matland (1995) argues that, when combined with low political conflict, local experimentation and adaptation occurs.

Analysis of Irish family policy presented in chapter four revealed a number of formative influences on its development. The Catholic Church had a profound influence on developments in this area. Regarding policy, the laissez-faire attitude best epitomised in Article 41 of the Constitution was the result of political subservience to the Church as well as the
conservative nature of Irish society and politics more generally. The nature of Irish political culture since the foundation of the State contributed to a society which regarded the family as off-limits. The Church’s ability to exercise its power in different ways, through its teaching, political and cultural influence and service provision resulted in what Breen et al. (1990) argued was a most unambiguous policy of non-state interference. In reality, policies emerged which did influence the family, but did so in ways which did not oppose Church teaching, hence they caused little conflict. While changes to Irish family policy began to emerge from the 1970s onwards, partly in response to modernising forces, there remained a lack of clarity, specificity and coherence regarding what Irish family policy stood for. Despite developments in particular areas such as childcare and increases in financial transfers, in the 21st century Irish family policy remained, in the words of Canavan (2012), elusive.

This lack of clarity was equally pronounced in the field of family and parenting support. An absence of any State services for children and families characterised the majority of the years of the 20th century. Those that were provided were done so either by the Church through institutions or by community and voluntary groups often working at a local level. Although there were calls for services to support families and parents experiencing the challenges of daily life, the contentious nature of the debate regarding service support for children and families, as well as a lack of political will, continued to impede major policy developments in this area. In such a vacuum, the voluntary and community sector met locally defined needs.

While the Child Care Act 1991 provided for the first time in the history of the State a legislative provision for family support services, its implementation was prolonged, fragmented and under-resourced. Although services - both statutory and voluntary – expanded over this period, they did so without any “clear objective to determine what such services might achieve” (McKeown, Clarke and Little, 2004, p. 54). Despite
calls from a range of actors, notably the statutory health boards, for policy guidance and clear objectives on family support, none were forthcoming. The generally disinterested (Skehill, 2005) or reluctant Irish State (Gilligan, 2009), while shifting somewhat in the child protection arena to produce clear policy guidance, remained recalcitrant in the broader area of family and parenting support. Clear policy objectives in relation to family and parenting support were and are yet to be realised (Canavan, 2010).

To set this in the context of the literature on ambiguity presented in chapter two, it appears that from a policy perspective parenting and family support is indeed ambiguous. The continuing calls for a clear policy statement on family and parenting support is suggestive that what exists now is unclear. In the absence of any clear policy statement, multiple interpretations of what constitutes family and parenting support at the street-level are possible. The State was willing to fund services in the voluntary and community sector without any framework. Local interpretations of what family support services constituted thus emerged. That the State is on the cusp of producing a policy statement on family and parenting support for the first time (DCYA, 2014) further reinforces the sense that there is currently a gap in the policy discourse.

Taking Rainey and Jung’s (2010) criteria for ambiguous policies, while there is little argument that the target of the policy is clear enough, there is less clarity regarding what type of work is involved. Even if we were to take the goal at its broadest, to “support parents”, or to “support families”, there is little clarity in these as policy statements regarding what is involved in providing this support, to what extent and for how long. As noted in chapter two, parenting support can range from the provision of information right through to mandatory or court ordered parenting classes. Family support can potentially cut across health, education, social security and housing policies, policy domains which in themselves could have multiple, competing and ambiguous goals. There is also an absence of any clarity regarding short and long term goals. This statement appears self-
evident given that no policy goals were identifiable other than the vague or broad ones suggested above. Even if we take the goal of the National Children’s Strategy most directly related to family support, that “children will receive quality supports and services”, it is arguably equally as broad. Finally, there is no sense of what a successfully implemented parenting and family support policy would look like for families when implemented. As a policy, it is not evaluable from an impact perspective as there is no description of what a well-functioning policy would look like when implemented.

Taking Matland’s definition of policy ambiguity, a similar picture emerges. In Ireland, there was (and is) an ambiguity of goals and to a certain extent an ambiguity of means. Funding continues to be provided, there are plenty different ways or methods (technologies) of doing family and parenting support, as the work of McKeown, Clarke and Little (2004) demonstrated, but there is a lack of specificity about the overall policy objectives, about what is trying to be achieved, and how it can be accurately and effectively achieved and measured at the street-level.

As per Matland’s model and the words of Baier et al. (1996), ambiguous goals permit local creativity, innovation and flexibility. They permit new technologies and innovations to develop, almost in a trial-and-error fashion. As outlined in chapter five of this study, local decision makers were broadly free to develop family support services as they wished. This power was underlined by the introduction of Mol an Óige as a new approach to working with families by the local child care managers in two counties in the West of Ireland. While ostensibly a family support approach, it required workers to focus on engaging and working with parents to a far greater degree than previous modes of working. It also provided a structure for engagement with parents and a process to meet needs. It sought to improve the work of family support by bringing clarity regarding how to engage with parents and families in an attempt to overcome the perceived failures of previous approaches. In short, it put a
framework on how to respond. The introduction of Mol an Óige fulfils Matland’s characterisation of ambiguous policy as experimental implementation. Policy goals and outcomes are largely determined by the range of actors involved at the local level, the resources available to them and their interpretation or perception of what the policy constitutes. Opportunities arise for local entrepreneurs to develop responses to local needs so that what the ambiguous policy looks like on the ground can vary from site to site. In analysing such a scenario, context matters and a street-level perspective required to examine implementation.

8.3. Parenting support in a local context
Bottom-up approaches to policy implementation can provide useful insights into the nature of problems which policy is designed to address, and the role of various actors in resolving such problems. Elmore’s (1979) backward mapping approach is notable in this regard. Beginning with the problem and examining and assessing how local agencies and citizens respond to the solutions put forward can teach policy makers much about the nature of the problem and the implementation process involved. This and the street-level analysis implied by Elmore, and Lipsky (1980), allow for the identification of policy problems as experienced on the ground and how street-level bureaucrats respond.

As outlined in chapter two, parenting support can mean different things to different authors. It can involve supporting parents in the parenting process, through increasing their resources and competencies, and it can also involve providing broader support for parents and families. Evidence gathered for this study from case file analysis and outlined in chapter five detailed the broad array of individual and family needs that featured as part of case goals in Mol an Óige. While the parenting support and behaviour (of the child) categories accounted for the overwhelming number of goals identified in cases, there was a range of other goals which
point to the wider aspects of supporting parents and families. Case file analysis also pointed to the multiplicity of goals in numerous cases.

Other evidence from this study verifies the varying nature of parenting support needs by families who accessed Mol an Óige. In chapters six and seven, workers provided accounts of doing a whole array of activities to meet the needs of parents. In their actions they provided a range of social supports: concrete supports in the form of practical help; advice and information in the form of delivering their skills to support parents, both in parenting and in broader aspects of family life; emotional support, often in the form of lending an ear, listening to parents' problems and troubles; and esteem support, again through their skills in providing feedback to engender confidence and increase self-esteem in parents. In delivering these types of supports, they were bounded both by their organisational environment and the clients that they worked with: parents and families.

Taken together with the array of issues identified in the goal analysis, the evidence suggests that supporting parents may not simply be about providing parenting techniques (parenting support), but as outlined in chapter two, section 3, there is a broader ecology of parent and family life which requires working towards. The multiplicity of issues facing some parents and families in this study points to the challenge of uncoupling parenting support from broader notions of parenting and family support.

8.4. The utility of organisational factors of the Jewell and Glaser framework in examining street-level behaviour

Jewell and Glaser (2006) suggested that the implementation of policies is affected by the organisational setting in which street-level work occurs. The nature of worker-client interactions and how organisational factors shape that interaction matter at the street-level. They matter because they affect how clients receive the policy, which in traditional street-level theory, results in the production of policy by these actors. They also matter
because they can allow for the identification of factors or parts of them which facilitate or impede implementation. Thus, Jewell and Glaser argue that their work has analytical purchase and can also lead to the creation of policy-specific knowledge.

For the purposes of examining the utility of the Jewell and Glaser framework in this study, it was split into two sections. Those factors which were characterised as organisational were: the role expectation of workers; the incentives they have to do their work; and the knowledge and expertise they have at their disposal.

**Role expectations**

Jewell and Glaser (2006) suggest that examining the role expectations of street-level workers can provide insight into the implementation process. How workers perceive themselves, their role and their understanding of what they do regarding the policy to be implemented has the potential to identify similarities and differences between the goals of a policy and the actions of street-level workers. Their analysis of client employment policies revealed that workers’ perceptions of themselves impeded the attainment of the policy goal of client employment. They viewed themselves as narrow technicians, focusing on eligibility for welfare support, rather than actors empowered to move workers towards employment opportunities. The fragmented nature of the employment support system, and the training which workers received, tended to reinforce this perception.

The evidence in this study suggested that family support workers as street-level bureaucrats perceived their roles to shift between bureaucratic and more care-orientated positions (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003; Van Berkel et al., 2010). Many workers spoke about providing support to parents and families in a manner which strictly adhered to the Mol an Óige approach, and in what they perceived as a family-support way. They taught the skills as part of the approach and checked with families each week on
how things were progressing. While they worked to engage families, the main aim of this was to teach or model parenting skills so as to enhance parental capacity. Other workers tended to operate in a more citizen-agent way, doing whatever they could for parents and families, sharing their own experiences, frustrations and resources, which were often personal. They made themselves available outside office hours for families and were often on the end of the phone. This was equally construed as being family-support orientated.

However, at the same time, workers realised that there was limit to meeting the needs of parents in that their function was to support and not to supplant. This view curbed workers in what they did, and revealed a tension in their role: to work in a way which ultimately did everything for the parent was not family support. Their role was to support, not supplant parents. The findings suggest that the ambiguity of family support permitted workers to interpret their roles in different ways, but that they were ultimately limited in some ways by their understanding of family support being just that: support that was needs-led, empowering and time limited.

These conflicting roles point to the importance of workers’ perceptions of the policy or programme they are implementing, something which Jewell and Glaser do not include in their framework. Family support was described as something which was unstructured, vague or woolly. As an approach to family and parenting support, Mol an Óige gave workers a mechanism by which they could do family and parenting support in a structured way, where previously there was no structure. They were positive about the nature of the approach, believing that it worked well for them as workers and for those that they worked with and for. Their view of it tended to influence their faithfulness to it. These findings echo those of Tummers et al. (2012) and May and Winter (2009), who stress the importance of examining a worker’s perception of what they are required to implement. Where workers assess policies and programmes as working
for clients, they tend to implement them. Where policies are assessed as negative, implementation suffers. Where a worker’s understanding of a programme matches their understanding of the policy domain, they will tend to implement it more faithfully.

Regarding the utility of the framework, examining role expectations tells us much about one aspect of the organisational landscape which structures street-level bureaucratic behaviour. It has highlighted the importance of examining workers’ perceptions of their own role in explaining behaviour. This goes beyond Lipsky’s sense of simply observing what occurs in street-level bureaucracies, but rather seeks to incorporate the active voice of workers in how they perceive their role and what they do.

As a factor being examined in this study, it has revealed how workers’ understandings of their own roles influence the implementation of family and parenting support on the ground. This is important because workers are the main resource in this policy area. Therefore, how they view their role is central to understanding the nature of what gets implemented, what a client receives. This is in turn important in a policy like family and parenting support, where there can be a lack of clarity regarding what is to be implemented. In this sense, a worker’s role can narrow or widen what gets delivered, and in a street-level bureaucratic sense, what the policy looks like. However, in pointing us in the direction of examining role expectations of street-level bureaucrats, Jewell and Glaser’s work has served to draw attention to one important aspect not mentioned in their framework which has potential explanatory power: the street-level workers’ views of the policy or programme they are required to implement. I suggest that such an aspect be added to the definition of role expectation in the framework. It has enhanced the understanding in this study of workers’ actions and willingness to implement Mol an Óige and provide support to parents and families.
Incentives

The Jewell and Glaser framework posits that the actions that workers take in implementing a policy are determined by the incentives they have. They can be both rewarded and sanctioned for pursuing particular courses of action. In examining this factor, the authors argue that we need to look at both the extrinsic and intrinsic rewards and sanctions operating at the organisational level, and those which occur at the individual level. Jewell and Glaser’s analysis found that organisational sanctions influenced what workers did. They focussed on completing paperwork related to facilitating welfare payments so as to not be reprimanded by their supervisors. The absence of any rewards for addressing broader issues of client employment meant that such conversations did not occur. Indeed, the associated paperwork in addressing this issue acted as a disincentive.

The evidence from this study suggests that family and parenting support is provided due to the intrinsic rewards and sanctions available to them rather than extrinsic ones. Workers were motivated by doing a good job, by seeing positive results for families and closing cases successfully as a result of Mol an Óige. They got satisfaction from helping families and the engagement they had with them. This was strongly emphasised in the findings. They perceived temporary promotions (acting-up responsibilities) and assignment of additional tasks by their supervisors as acknowledgement of a job well done, as a reward as opposed to a punishment. Similarly, they viewed the assigning of challenging cases as a recognition of their skills and ability. Steps taken by supervisors to reduce burnout were viewed as an appreciation of hard work in difficult circumstances. More generally, supervision was a site for professional exchange, support and motivation, where positive feedback and constructive criticism featured. They saw rewards in the comments of other professionals and how they felt they were perceived by them.
Many of the sanctions which were possible for workers to experience were opposites of their rewards. Workers spoke of an absence of formal sanctions for not progressing cases, citing this as a feature of the sector they worked in. The supervision regime of Mol an Óige, with its file auditing and observations of practice, tended to act as an incentive to generally have case files up-to-date. However, more informal sanctions occurred when cases did not go well and which closed unsuccessfully. Such situations were spoken of as personal disappointments by some workers, a form of intrinsic punishment.

These findings both echo and challenge Lipsky’s street-level perspective. On the one hand, he notes that street-level bureaucrats work in a sector which cannot formally reward good work or punish poor work. However, workers can draw a sense of satisfaction from changes in the behaviour of their clients. On the other hand, taking on harder or more challenging cases is not rewarded. The bureaucracy’s focus on targets and other performance measures discentivises workers from taking such cases as they are too time consuming. While workers can receive more or less interesting work from their supervisors, they tend to be bound up in a conflictual relationship more than a consensual one. The evidence gathered for this study somewhat challenges these last points. While there are referral pressures, workers feel they can challenge supervisors about closing cases. More generally, as depicted below, the worker-supervisor relationship is more consensual than conflictual, similar to findings by Evans (2011), Brewer (2005) and Brehm and Gates (1997) who all point to positive worker-supervisor relationships as being a motivating and rewarding force in street-level implementation. Most notably, the evidence here is similar to findings by Nielsen (2006), who found that workers were more inclined to implement policies and programmes where workers were challenged by aspects of it, and were motivated by the social interaction it required.
There is value in examining the role of rewards and sanctions of workers in the implementation of family and parenting support. It has highlighted the motivations of workers in implementing a policy which does not always result in positive outcomes for all concerned. Where there is an absence of formal rewards and a virtual absence of formal sanctions, it is important to examine other forces at play in the street-level bureaucrat’s world. In this case study, examining workers’ incentive structure has revealed that implementation was impacted by a number of aspects of their environment. Commitment to their clients was one aspect of this, as was a commitment to the Mol an Óige approach. Equally, however, the formalised supervision process and the potential for sanctions ensured that worker’s paperwork was up-to-date and cases progressed.

Knowledge and Expertise

Jewell and Glaser suggest that the knowledge and skills which workers have will influence the implementation process and the extent to which policy goals are achieved. To fully understand its influence, we need to examine the training and education of workers, and their knowledge of resources which they can access in doing their work. In their case study, Jewell and Glaser found that the limited education and training of workers impeded the attainment of the goal of client employment. While knowledgeable about the immediate steps to be taken when engaging with a client about eligibility, they lacked broader knowledge about how eligibility for different return to work supports interacted. More generally, they did not have the skills to assess and motivate clients in an individualised manner.

The evidence from this study suggests that workers drew on a variety of resources in implementing Mol an Óige and delivering family and parenting support. Programme resources were prominent amongst workers’ responses. Workers’ knowledge of particular skills of the Mol an Óige approach was rated very highly. In certain cases, supervisors observed
them using new skills. In addition to this, the approach introduced to Mol an Óige was viewed as a positive way of delivering family support; it provided structure and a process. Supervision was cited positively, this time in the sense of being a shared, problem-solving space where reflection on practice could occur. Peers were also important in problem-solving and helping to address particular case needs.

Workers also drew on their own educational and training knowledge in engaging with parents and families. They incorporated previous skills with programme learning to meet the needs of families as they saw them in as comprehensive a manner as possible. This points to the need for skilled workers with a variety of practice experiences to be involved in the delivery of Mol an Óige-type supports for parents and families, and in working to the broader ecology of parenting. However, there were barriers to meeting these needs. Reductions in availability of money for workers to provide particular supports to parents and children were recounted by workers. Informal limits on mileage allowances made it more difficult to meet families and provide different forms of support. Some workers reported that they had difficulty accessing some administrative basics such as office space and computers. Workers also had difficulty accessing particular services for clients. Accessing supports for clients with addiction or mental health issues was challenging. Meeting these needs was not within the skillsets of workers.

The evidence, combined with existing literature, suggests that there is value in exploring the knowledge and expertise of street-level workers and the resources available to them when implementing family and parenting support. It has highlighted the importance of non-financial resources in delivering support to parents and children, the importance of skilled workers in engaging with families and the role a positive office environment can add to the process. Most significantly, perhaps, it has highlighted the importance of Mol an Óige as an approach to providing family and parenting support. Workers and supervisors both spoke about it...
as providing a structure which allowed them to deliver support to parents and families where previously they had none. It has also highlighted, however, the challenges in delivering family and parenting support in certain cases and in particular contexts. The impact of the Irish economic crisis was felt in both reduced budgets for engaging with families and a lack of cover for staff on maternity leave. In addition, particular or complex needs were also difficult to meet, with workers not having the skills to meet these needs.

8.5. The utility of client factors of the Jewell and Glaser framework in examining street-level behaviour

The second part of the Jewell and Glaser framework examined in this study contained factors which I characterised as client-related. Each factor was related to different aspects of the worker-client relationship. Specifically, those factors which were characterised as client-related were: the authority of workers over clients; the workload of workers in implementing Mol an Óige; and the extent and nature of client contact.

Authority

The Jewell and Glaser framework defines authority as the ability of workers to have an impact on others, their clients, by virtue of their position. It involves examining their power as determined through their job descriptions, what they are required to do and the discretion they have in making use of their power. It includes the resources they can access for clients and their ability to sanction them. The suggestion in examining this factor is that the discretion workers have to meet the needs of clients, and the power they have over them, can affect the attainment of policy goals. In their study, Jewell and Glaser found that workers administered rewards for clients who looked for work by providing additional benefits, and administered sanctions where documentation was incomplete or where clients failed to show up for meetings. However, they had little discretion in making these decisions as they were taken by others elsewhere in the
system. The linking of their authority to financial benefits tended to impede wider conversations with clients about other issues related to employment and more generally prevented the establishment of rapport and trust.

Analysing authority in this study revealed that workers exercised degrees of discretion – bounded discretion – in engaging with their clients. This engagement was a site of power for the worker (but also for client, as will be shown below). Workers decided, for example, on when clients would be subject to assessment, and whether they would be subject to assessment. In other cases they used these assessments to challenge clients about aspects of their lives and the challenges they faced. A worker’s power determined much of what followed. Where there were differences of opinion regarding the scoring of assessments, workers’ views won out. This evidence on assessment supports that of authors such as Ellis (2011), who found that practitioners engaged in assessment processes embraced them as a form of controlling information given to clients and maintaining tight control over engagement more generally. In this study, control over the assessment process resulted in control over the family plan, developed to guide the work.

The power of the worker was also evidenced in what they did in each case. Worker discretion occurred mainly in the home and in what they did with clients. The main resource they brought to the process was themselves, their own skills and actions. In this regard, analysing authority revealed that workers were willing to engage in both narrow teaching work, and broader care-orientated ways. While they used aspects of Mol an Óige to deliver resources directly to parents, such as the quick-and-early, workers also determined what other resources would be provided, through their contacts, through their own resources and through engaging with other services. They also used their resources to sanction clients, mainly through the withholding of esteem support (e.g. not praising them) or challenging parents about their behaviour. Although some workers withheld
resources (quick-and-early) from clients for fear it would be construed as a bribe to engage, such control would appear as contrary to the empowering nature of the service through withholding information from clients (Ellis, 2011).

Ultimately, worker discretion in engaging with clients was bounded by the role and practice of supervision in Mol Óige, a relationship which authority illuminated. Supervisors had the ability to instruct workers to close cases, and steer them in subtle and not so subtle ways. While workers could recommend sanctioning clients through closing cases, it was ultimately at the will of the supervisor to do so. However, workers were overall very positive about the supervision process. Their view that it made them responsible to families provides a sense of street-level accountability to their narrative. Supervision was a process which workers viewed as a support to keep them on track so as to meet the needs of clients. For supervisors, while it was a site of encouragement and support, as referred to in chapter 6, section 3, it was also an instrument of case processing, of keeping cases moving towards closure and checking that implementation was as it should be.

This picture of supervision both supports and challenges Lipsky’s view of worker-supervisor interaction. While there is an emphasis on processing cases so as to deal with referrals, there is also a sense that cases will be kept open so that needs are met. This latter point reflects the characterisation of managers and workers in social work and social care settings in the research of Evans (2011) and Ellis (2011). Moreover, the formalised supervisory process in Mol Óige contrasts with the inability of supervisors to effectively monitor workers in Lipsky’s world. The support that parents and families experience is determined by decisions made by workers within a client’s home. But this is within a wider supervisory context which is structured, directive and perceived as enhancing accountability.
It is clear that examining the factor authority in the context of street-level implementation of family and parenting support has been useful. It has allowed for the identification of a worker-supervisor relationship which counters much of traditional street-level thinking. In the context of Mol an Óige, a focus on authority has provided insight into the strong role that supervisors play in delimiting discretion and shaping implementation. It has also highlighted the way in which workers’ own discretion shapes the policy that parents and families receive on the ground through their use of resources and relative inability to sanction clients compared to their supervisors.

**Workload**

The framework identifies workload as the demands that occur on a regular basis for workers resulting from programme requirements and case needs. It suggests that the amount of work, in both a quantitative and qualitative sense, will influence implementation and the attainment of policy goals. Assessing this factor involves gathering data on the numbers of cases and the types of decisions and actions that each case requires. In the Jewell and Glaser study, the excessive workload of street-level bureaucrats in administering multiple policy initiatives resulted in them not being proficient in the tasks they had to do. The interaction of different schemes and eligibility criteria which were regularly revised resulted in uncertainty about the decisions bureaucrats made and served to maintain a narrow work focus on eligibility and paperwork.

The evidence in this study suggests that, contrary to Lipsky’s thesis, workers were not overburdened in delivering family and parenting support by the number of cases on their books. Mol an Óige actively sought to reduce the number of cases which each worker had, but required them to engage more intensively with families in delivering support. Analysing workload revealed that workers having to familiarise themselves with the Mol an Óige approach contributed significantly to their workload, albeit in
a temporary way. However, implementing the approach also contributed
to their planning work and administration on an ongoing basis. Despite
such increases, workers were of the view that these processes improved
the level of support being provided to parents and families.

Beyond this, workload was determined by a number of factors. The needs
of each case had a dominant influence on workload. As a result, they
provided different forms of support and engaged with a range of
professionals to meet the needs of clients. Focussing on workload revealed
that role expectation was impacting on the nature and amount of work
that workers were willing to undertake. What workers were willing to do
was determined again by how they saw themselves.

Again, the state-agent/citizen-agent dichotomy is useful here. The
evidence suggests that many workers act in a citizen-agent manner and
cope in a manner which resembles moving towards clients (Tummers et al.,
2015). They adjust or go beyond the boundaries of the policy or
programme they are implementing to meet the needs of clients. They do
so in pragmatic ways with the aim of securing long-term success. They use
their own resources to help clients, they bend rules and they prioritise
clients. However, the evidence also suggests that some workers move
away from clients and behave in a more state-agent manner. They deal
with clients in standard ways and ration the supports that they can
provide, mainly through adopting a narrow approach to what they perceive
their role to be.

The evidence suggests that workload is also determined by workers’
perceptions of the role of clients in the implementation process. While
there was a recognition that workers needed to meet needs, they also felt
that families needed to be active players in the process. Workers tended
to speak critically of families who did not engage or who were not willing to
become partners in the process. Cases where families did not take on this
role were constructed as not engaging. Case file analysis in chapter five
revealed that over half of the cases which were deemed to be unsuccessful by workers were closed because families were judged to have disengaged, or not engaged at all. In this, we can see workers moving against clients through rigid rule following (Tummers et al., 2015). Workers applied the principles of Mol an Óige rigidly as a way of sanctioning clients who did not engage in the implementation process. They also challenged parents about their unwillingness to take on aspects of the programme. In doing so, workers and supervisors felt that they were promoting the empowering aspects and the voluntary nature of family and parenting support.

Examining the workload of workers in Mol an Óige has made an important contribution to our understanding of parenting and family support implementation. It has revealed patterns of work behaviour which differ from that which went before. It has also highlighted the impact of individual needs on the actions of workers, and uncovered the different coping strategies which they adopt in delivering support. It also revealed how workers engage with a range of professionals to meet the needs of families and work towards the broader ecology of parenting. However, it has also revealed how the role of family support principles, particularly the empowerment of families, plays out in policy delivery. Workers and supervisors expect families to be active participants in the implementation process. Thus, examining workload has signalled the importance, again, of considering workers’ policy perceptions and how their role expectations influence what they do. In identifying this, the evidence indicates that in applying this framework in this context, attention needs to be paid to the role of the client as active or constructive participant in the process of implementation.

**Client contact**

Client contact is identified in the Jewell and Glaser framework as referring to the frequency, amount of time and quality of the interaction with clients. It suggests that the implementation of policy and the attainment of
policy goals are affected by frequency and amount of contact that workers have with clients, and the quality of their interactions. In assessing this factor, importance is placed on the overall environment in which workers and clients interact and the atmosphere created by the programme being implemented. In their research, Jewell and Glaser found that the environment of street-level work impeded work toward client employment. Busy public offices were inappropriate places to have individualised conversations about the challenges clients faced in their day-to-day lives. In addition, that workers were mainly eligibility focused tended to result in the worker-client exchange mainly focusing on the provision and processing of large amounts of information to assess whether benefits could be provided or not.

Mol an Óige is an in-home approach to family support. An in-home service was viewed as making families more comfortable and afforded them greater privacy in talking about issues and family problems. Parents were viewed as preferring this. There were occasions where work was undertaken in the worker’s centre or office, where families were insistent that they come into the service. While this was not the preferred location from the worker’s point of view, it did happen.

As the worker, through their discretion and authority, exercised power, so did the parents. The amount of time and frequency of workers’ engagement with parents and families was determined mainly by the family itself and the stage of the Mol an Óige process which workers were engaged in with them. At the beginning, workers met with families approximately once a week. However, as assessments were undertaken, engagement increased as skills were imparted and support provided. These were often intense periods of work between parent and worker. As parents and families were viewed as using the skills provided by the worker and goals were being achieved, workers began to withdraw support slowly, but maintained contact via phone.
However, the speed with which this happened was perceived to depend on the complexity of the problems facing families and their capacity and willingness to engage. Given the voluntary nature of the engagement for most families, they decided when and how often workers came to their homes. Workers perceived family decisions about frequency and regularity of contact being taken for a number of reasons: it was all the families could handle; they had other things going on in their lives; or that is all they were willing to commit to. In some ways, the role of the family here resembles the findings of Murray (2006), who found that families were able to determine the extent of policy implementation by choosing whether to permit home visits by workers, turn up for appointments, or even engage at all.

The level of engagement was also a determining factor. While Lipsky and others assumed that the client was relatively powerless in the implementation process, the findings here as well as those of Murray (2006) suggest a more active client. Where Lipsky argued that street-level bureaucrats structured the context of interaction, the context of interaction in this study was equally influenced by the clients. These findings, along with those in the other client-orientated factors, point to the potential of co-production as a significant addition to the Jewell and Glaser framework, where clients and workers co-produce policy through their interactions, mutual adjustments and joint problem-solving. While clients are not necessarily equal (Whittaker, 1980), they are encouraged to become more active in the production process (Hood, 2000). In assessing the interaction between worker and client, Bovaird’s (2007, p.847) definition of co-production is pertinent: “provision of services through regular long-term relationships between professionalised service providers and service users or other members of the community, where all parties make substantial resource contributions”.

Dolan and Holt (2010) note that worker-client relationships are based on trust, openness and honesty. The client needs to feel they are being
listened to by a worker who is concerned and respectful of them, reliable, responsive, accessible and available. The evidence here suggests that workers attempted to engage meaningfully with parents and families. They emphasised the centrality of trust to the operation of Mol an Óige. They adjusted to the needs of clients as they met them, being careful not to be overbearing. In short, they responded to what they saw. This evidence is supportive of that in Scott (1997) and Smith and Donavan (2003), who separately found that child welfare workers responded to the particular characteristics of clients, their strengths, needs and weaknesses.

However, there was a limit to this for Mol an Óige workers. Although they stressed their commitment to delivering on their tasks in the process, they also expected families to deliver on their commitments, in a spirit of partnership and empowerment. They expected families to take on more of the skills, to work towards the achievement of goals and move to a position where support from the worker was no longer required. In short, they expected them to move from passive to active participants in the implementation process.

Examining the factor client contact has provided rich data on the implementation of family and parenting support. It has highlighted the lengths that many workers go to in meeting the needs of parents and families, for example in being available out-of-hours or at weekends. It has also highlighted the importance of understanding the varied nature of parenting and family support needs and how they impact on implementation. Most significantly, perhaps, in examining client contact in the context of this policy area, the findings have pointed to the need to appreciate the role of the client in client contact, and more generally in policy implementation. This is not a feature of the Jewell and Glaser framework but I suggest its incorporation adds value to the framework and the analysis of street-level bureaucratic behaviour.
8.6. Conclusion
As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the relationship between the study of public administration and individual policy issues can be viewed as interdependent. Analysing policy responses to particular issues has the potential to reveal much about the policy process; equally, researching the policy process offers the opportunity to enhance knowledge about aspects of particular policies. This study has highlighted such interdependence.

Through the use of an ambiguous policy area – family and parenting support – it has sought to explore the utility of Jewell and Glaser’s conceptual framework for analysing street-level bureaucratic behaviour, the central research question underpinning the study. Given this interdependency, the utility of the framework can be assessed on two levels.

In relation to examining the implementation of ambiguous policies, it can be stated that the framework is useful. It has illuminated how policy ambiguity plays out at the street-level, in the multiple and multifaceted needs which family support workers seek to meet, and in the roles they adopt in trying to meet them. It has supported the creation of knowledge about family and parenting support practice which can inform future policy development. Through exploring each of its factors, the framework has enabled the highlighting of the varied nature of needs and issues which family support workers strive to meet on a daily basis. It has pointed to the potential of policy ambiguity being a useful construct to permit workers and families together to meet family needs as they define and see fit.

However, this evaluative judgement is tempered somewhat when the framework is assessed as an analytical tool for examining street-level behaviour. While it can be said that it is useful in that it has expanded on Lipsky’s original thesis and drawn attention to important aspects of street-level behaviour, this study has highlighted that there are notable gaps in some of the factors which comprise the framework. In relation to the factor role expectations, it fails to take into account the importance of
street-level bureaucrats’ perceptions of the policies they are asked to implement. This, as the study and previous literature has shown, can have an important effect on the implementation process. It has also highlighted the importance of considering the role of professional street-level bureaucrats – as opposed to lower level administrative staff considered in the development of the original framework – and the place of professional capacity, values and expertise in exploiting an ambiguous policy to do what they see as being best for the clients they work with.

Equally, in relation to the factor authority, the framework fails to take into account the interactions between professional street-level bureaucrats and their managers/supervisors. This study has highlighted the importance of examining this relationship, both for the purpose of exploring workers’ discretion and in also identifying the extent to which bureau-professionalism influences the implementation process through commitments to shared values and practice ideals.

Finally, regarding the factors workload and client contact, the framework fails to create room for an active role for service-users in the implementation process, as co-producers of the policy on the ground. Considering these gaps, it can be said that the Jewell and Glaser framework is useful to the extent that it highlights the importance of examining particular factors at the street-level. However, it requires revision so as to take account of the nature of family and parenting support policy implementation explored in this study. Below, in Figure 30, I present and discuss a revised framework based on the findings presented in this study:
In this revised framework, the factors knowledge and expertise, and incentives operate at the level of the organisation to influence worker-client interaction. In addition, role expectation plays a part. Here we have added the importance of exploring policy perceptions of workers as a criterion requiring examination. These three factors operate at the level of the organisation – the large pale blue area – and are constructed as inputs for the worker into the domain where worker and client interact – the pale
green area. In this domain, the worker uses these inputs in their work with clients. The interaction is influenced by what they can bring to the table (knowledge and expertise), how they view their role (expectations) and the motivations to do what they do (incentives). It is also influenced by the power workers have to influence clients directly (authority) and their workload. Clients also influence the workload of workers, through their needs and their resources. These are largely their willingness to engage and, as the work progresses, their willingness to become more active in the implementation process, to take on the skills and solutions provided by the worker and implement them. However, clients also determine many of the parameters of the interaction, such as when they occur, for how long and to what extent. In short, they exercise control over client contact. In this way, between the resources the client has and those that the worker brings, the service provided – in this case family and parenting support – is effectively co-produced.

A number of important contributions from this study can be outlined. Firstly, it has examined the utility of the Jewell and Glaser framework in evaluating the role of workers in providing vital support and assistance to parents and families in times of need. The framework helps us understand how the organisational context in which street-level bureaucrats operate shapes what they do when working with an ambiguous policy, a different one from which the framework was derived and where the goal was clearer (i.e. activation and client employment). In this sense, we can say that the model is useful. However, the nature of the policy examined in this study has also illuminated the importance of policy perceptions of street-level bureaucrats in influencing what they do. Parenting and family support has, at its core, professionals working in partnership with families and involving them in services in a manner which is more than simply being passive recipients. Indeed, it requires it. In applying the framework the vital role of the client thus requires consideration and incorporation. In
revising the framework, this study has proposed that co-production is a useful analytical construct through which this can be done.

A second contribution is identifiable. As outlined in the introduction, there is general paucity of research on and knowledge about policy implementation in Ireland. This gap is brought into sharper relief when street-level policy implementation is considered. In examining the role of street-level bureaucrats in the provision of parenting and family support in Ireland, this study makes a significant contribution to furthering our understanding of the policy process in this country. It is arguably one of the few, if any, Irish studies, which utilises this concept in exploring what happens at the street-level.

While Lipsky (1980) suggested that, in the presence of ambiguity, street-level bureaucrats were on their own, this research has indicated that this is not necessarily the case. Bureaucrats in this study sourced support and help in the implementation process from a variety of places, including the client. Lipsky also argued that workers and supervisors were bound in a conflictual relationship, but the findings of this study suggest that workers used their supervisors as valuable sources of support, motivation and accountability. Where Lipsky argued that workers use client processing approaches to cope with workload and manage their clients, the findings of this study suggest that workers’ techniques and approaches were used to improve the lot of clients. While these findings are context-specific, they nonetheless provide important caveats to the street-level thesis and share much with the findings of more recent research in this area conducted in other countries and other policy domains.

Thirdly, this study has examined the role of policy ambiguity as both a meso-level (acting at the level of the policy itself) and a micro-level (the level of delivery) concept in the Irish policy process. Specifically, it has shown that the way family policy, and thus family and parenting support policy, has developed in Ireland has resulted in the creation of
opportunities for what Matland (1995) termed experimental implementation at the local level. Local organisations, in this case the statutory child and family services in two counties, were free to develop their own approaches to doing family and parenting support. As a result, they introduced the Mol an Óige approach as a way of working with parents and families, an approach and process which workers found very helpful in their day-to-day tasks. At the micro-level, the ambiguity of the policy created space for street-level interpretations of what it meant to implement family and parenting support. These interpretations were manifest in the actions of individual street-level bureaucrats, who in the main worked to meet the needs of clients. In using the concept of ambiguity, the study has illuminated the importance of parenting and family support being a needs-led, bottom-up process. As this study has demonstrated, family and parenting support on the ground is about meeting a range of needs, some of which centre on parenting and some of which relate to the broader context or ecology in which parenting occurs. Allowing freedom for local actors to use their skills to respond to the needs of families they work with is an important consideration for any subsequent policy statement on family and parenting support.

A number of implications for further consideration are identifiable from this study.

In relation to research into public policy and administration, the study has produced a revised framework which requires further testing. Given the methodological approach, the findings presented here are context-specific and thus their applicability to other policy domains is limited. Applying the revised framework in a different policy context is necessary. I suggest that its utility could be examined through applying it in unambiguous policy domains, such as the activation of lone parents, as well as those which are more ambiguous. In this latter regard, the State’s policies on community development provide one such testing ground. A second area of research related to the application of the framework involves assessing the
experienced reality of clients in the implementation and co-production process. Observations of the interaction between worker and client are warranted, as are semi-structured interviews with clients alone to garner their perspective on the role of workers and themselves in the implementation process.

Separately, this study sought to use quantitative techniques to assess the perspectives of street-level bureaucrats in relation to some of the factors under consideration. Although limited, their use points to the potential in developing quantitative measures of street-level behaviour. This is a growing area in scholarship, predominantly in the United States, and one I would like to develop further in the Irish context. For example, the development and refinement of quantitative instruments would allow for a more powerful, general analysis of the influence of policy perceptions on street-level behaviour. At a purely practical level, it would facilitate greater national and international comparative research of street-level behaviour.

At the level of policy, the research highlights the multiple challenges that families and parents can face in their day-to-day lives. It signals the importance of achieving balance between meeting the needs of local people requiring support and the desire on behalf of the State to frame the meeting of those needs. While ambiguous policies can lead to drift, they can also create the space for innovation and enhanced responsiveness. As the State prepares to publish its first policy statement on family and parenting support, this research offers some food for thought about the interaction between State officials – street-level workers – and the people that they serve.

At the level of practice, this research signals the importance to workers of having some structure on and support for what they do. Mol an Óige provides a framework for doing family and parenting support, it outlines a process for the delivery of support. While not without its problems, it has been warmly welcomed by workers in this study as positively framing what
they do in a family-support orientated way. There is much for service managers and practitioners to take from this study about how family and parenting support can be delivered on the ground.
Bibliography


319


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Klieman, A. (1999) Constructive Ambiguity in Middle East Peace-Making. The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv.


Appendix one: staff survey

Section 1 - Nature of Work

1. My work is carried out:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entirely on an Individual Basis</th>
<th>Entirely on a Group Basis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only Parents</td>
<td>Only Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Parents and Children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. In my current position, I work with:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning Work</th>
<th>Doing Direct Face to Face Work</th>
<th>Recording</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Approximately how much time do you spend per week:

   _________ hrs.   _________ hrs.   _________ hrs.

4. What three key theories do you draw on in your day to day practice?
   i. ________________________________
   ii. ________________________________
   iii. ________________________________

5. Are your agency’s policies grounded in a particular theory?
   Yes  No  Don’t Know

6. Now, we would like to ask you about your experience at work, your caseload, and your perceptions of the current state of the practice.

   On average, how many cases are you responsible for in a year?

   _________

7. For a multitude of reasons, planned work can’t always be completed and cases are closed prematurely. Please
3.46

Total number of cases closed in the last 12 months

8. Please tick the intervention level at which you do most of your work?

- Level 1 - Work with all children and young people
- Level 2 - Work with children with additional needs requiring preventive supports
- Level 3 - Work with children with chronic or serious problems requiring intensive support in the community
- Level 4 - Work with children and family has broken down temporarily/ permanently and who are likely to be living away from home.

9. It is also important for us to understand the wider context in which your work takes place. Please tell us about the context of your work in relation to the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Disagree or Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My agency has a keen understanding of community needs.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. There are good planning processes in my agency.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My agency has a clear focus on its goal.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. We don't have enough caseworkers to get things done.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. People here actively contribute to shaping agency objectives.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. My agency is committed to evaluation.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. My agency engages in high quality needs assessments.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Making progress isn't simply a matter of resources</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My agency routinely re-evaluates its goals/missions.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. We don't have sufficient funding to achieve our goals.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Agencies sometimes work together, are sometimes at odds with each other, or operate independently. Please tell us about

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Disagree or Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My agency refers to the local level project / service that you work for.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. What three key agencies do you collaborate with in your day to day work?

1. 

2. 

3. 

12. In the five most recent cases that have come to a conclusion, please indicate the extent to which you have achieved the child/family goals and the key evidence of this.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Most</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Key Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. People have different impressions of the impact that their work has. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Disagree or Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I believe I make a difference.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I see clear evidence of the impact of my work.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My work has a lasting impact.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The system is too complicated for me to make a difference.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The children I work with have too many problems to deal with in a community setting.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. We need new frameworks/models for youth services.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. Many forms of support allow us to better meet our goals. There are also many obstacles that can get in the way of successfully achieving outcomes. Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Disagree or Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My supervisors provide regular feedback on my performance.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I receive recognition for my work.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My supervisors provide backing for my decisions.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. There are adequate agency resources to achieve my goals.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My agency tries to make sure I don’t have too many cases.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. My supervisors take steps to decrease caseworker burnout.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The supervision process supports my work.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. There is sufficient casework recording in my agency.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My agency provides adequate opportunities for reflection.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. How frequently do you receive supervision:</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fortnightly</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Please specify:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. How frequently do you receive</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. Do you think there is a scope for improving your day to day practice in working with children and parents?  

Yes  No
If yes, please identify three key things that would help improve your practice?

1. ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

2. ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

3. ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

Section 4 – Impact of Mol an Oige/Boys Town Approach

These questions are about whether Mol an Oige/Boys Town approach has had an impact on your work. Based on your experience with the Boys Town programme, please tell us to what extent your knowledge/skills in the following areas have increased or decreased.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Greatly Decreased</th>
<th>Decreased</th>
<th>Neither Increased or Decreased</th>
<th>Increased</th>
<th>Greatly Increased</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Imparting knowledge to parents through my teaching skills</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Building healthy relationships</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Creating a positive family environment</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Promoting self determination /self government</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ability to connect with the various programme domains</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Ability to connect with client family members</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Ability to connect with peer networks of children</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Ability to connect with schools</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ability to connect with other organisations in the family’s life</td>
<td>Understanding of social networking/mapping</td>
<td>Teaching as intervention</td>
<td>Active listening</td>
<td>Corrective teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>15.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
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<td>○</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
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<td>26.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 5 – About You

Finally, we want to ask you a few questions about yourself. You may be assured of complete confidentiality. Data will only be used as part of an overall aggregate analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>How old were you on your last birthday?</th>
<th>Do you live in the same County as you work?</th>
<th>How many years of experience in this field have you?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Male</td>
<td>________________________________</td>
<td>☐ Yes</td>
<td>___________________________ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What county do you work in?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What agency/service do you work for (remember, this is confidential)?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Mayo                     ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Roscommon                ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Job Title**

| ☐ Project Leader            | ☐ Project Worker                     |
|                            | ☐ Child Care Leader                  |
|                            | ☐ Other __________________________  |

**Is your training mainly in:**

| ☐ Early years               | ☐ Childcare                            |
|                            | ☐ Social Work                          |
|                            | ☐ Community work                       |
|                            | ☐ Youth work                           |
|                            | ☐ Teaching                             |
|                            | ☐ Other: ____________________________  |

**Training background/qualifications**

| ☐ Institute of Technology Certificate |
| ☐ Institute of Technology Diploma   |
| ☐ Institute of Technology Degree    |
| ☐ University degree programme       |
| ☐ University post-graduate degree programme |
| ☐ Other __________________________ |

*Please tick all relevant qualifications*
Average Hours Worked Per Week:

In the space provided below, please feel free to offer any information that you feel would help us better understand the practice environment in which you work.

______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________

Did you fill out a copy of this survey previously?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thanks for your time and opinions!
Appendix two: response values for each survey item - baseline and follow up

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time spent per week planning work</th>
<th>Mean hrs</th>
<th>Median hrs</th>
<th>Mode hrs</th>
<th>St. Deviation hrs</th>
<th>Min to Max</th>
<th>Missing (no response)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<th>Mode hrs</th>
<th>St. Deviation hrs</th>
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<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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<td>I would prefer not to work with other agencies</td>
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<td>Other agencies are hostile towards my work</td>
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<td>I could not do my job without the assistance of other agencies</td>
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<td>Interagency work only makes it harder to meet client needs</td>
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<td>I value the skills that other disciplines bring to my casework</td>
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<td>In most of my work I see myself as part of a multidisciplinary team</td>
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<td><strong>I believe I make a difference</strong></td>
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<td><strong>I see clear evidence of the impact of my work</strong></td>
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<td><strong>My work has lasting impact</strong></td>
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<td><strong>The system is too complicated for me to make a difference</strong></td>
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<td><strong>The children I work with have too many problems to deal with in a community setting</strong></td>
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<td><strong>We need new frameworks/models for youth services</strong></td>
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<td><strong>My supervisors provide regular feedback on my performance</strong></td>
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<td>I receive recognition for my work</td>
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<td>My supervisors provide backing for my decisions</td>
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<td>There are adequate agency resources to achieve my goals</td>
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<td>My agency tries to make sure I don’t have too many cases</td>
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<td>My supervisors take steps to decrease case worker burnout</td>
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<td>The supervision processes supports my work</td>
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**How old were you on your last birthday?**

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**How many years experience in this field have you?**

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**Average hours worked per week**

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**Work is carried out on .......**

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**Level at which you work**

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Appendix three: Interview schedule
workers (& adapted for supervisors)

Contextual Overview and Applicability

1. Could you tell me a little bit about your role and tasks in the organization you work in?
   a. (your role/job title/job description specific to Mol an Oige),

2. What is your understanding of Mol an Oige? Could you describe it?
   a. Has this understanding changed since you first starting working this way?

3. What is your knowledge of the organizational context within which the Mol an Oige model is operated? Could you describe it?

4. What is your understanding of the wider policy context? Could you talk a little about it please?

5. Are there particular categories of families/parents/young people which Mol an Oige is best suited to working with? If so, could you identify them?

6. Are there particular categories of families/parents/young people which the model is not suited to working with? If so, could you identify them?

Working with Families/Parents/Young People and Workload

7. Could you outline how you work with families when using the Mol an Oige model? Could you talk me through the process please?

8. In working with families, could you outline the range of tasks which you undertake (acknowledging that sets of tasks can differ for each case – but are there core tasks of the model or essential to it, core tasks in engaging with families and then case-specific tasks)?

9. Do you have any discretion in operating the model? Is it a rigid or flexible approach? Neither, both?

10. Acknowledging that each case has the potential to be different, how often:
    a. Would you work directly with families/parents/young people in a week?
    b. For how long (again on average)?

11. On average, how many cases would you have at one time?

12. On average, what is the length of time you work with each family?

13. Mol an Oige the importance of relationships between workers and parents/young people/families. Could you talk to me a little about that? What is that like?

14. Are there resources within your organization, or external in the community, which you access to support you when using Mol an Oige with families (resources here is meant in the widest sense of the word, other services, expertise, knowledge, access to particular personnel etc that you have used when implementing the model with families).
**Supports for You**

15. What training did you receive to implement Mol an Oige? Could you outline how that impacted on your work?

16. Were there challenges in implementing the approach initially? Were they overcome? How?

17. Could you outline the role supervision plays in your work?

18. Are there other resources within the organisation which you can access to help you in your work? (Mol an Oige specific, and more general resources)?

19. Are there resources external to the organization which you use in your work (access to other staff, expert staff, advice, mutual support amongst staff etc)?

20. Are there impediments to you doing your work? What are they?

21. Are there incentives in your work?

22. Are there any sanctions in your work?

23. Are there rewards in undertaking this type of work?

**Perceived Impact**

24. What has been the impact of Mol an Oige on your own work?

25. What has been the impact of Mol an Oige for families exposed to it?

26. Is there a impact in the wider (service) community of your service using Mol an Oige?

27. Is there anything else you would like to say which we have not spoken about, you have not mentioned, I have not asked you about, or we have not discussed?