6.1 INTRODUCTION

Many recent studies that have begun to speak of a sustainable concept of development have recognised the importance of maintaining and enhancing the quality of life for all citizens as central. In fact, one of the five objectives of the National Spatial Strategy is to “improve the quality of life for all sections of society”. Research on Quantifying Quality of Life undertaken by ERM consultants for the National Spatial Strategy, identified different sets of factors that influence quality in rural and urban contexts.

In rural areas key issues are the provision of education at first and second levels and also employment and training opportunities. Other important issues are health care provision, leisure and recreation facilities and public transport. Access to public transport is particularly significant in the more disadvantaged rural communities, especially for persons and households belonging to the lower social classes.

For towns and villages ERM identified a large menu of factors that contribute to a good quality of life. Places that have the majority of the following attributes are regarded as having a good quality of life:

- good income level and distribution
- high level of personal and material assets (e.g., home ownership)
- access to economic, social and physical infrastructure
- low crime level
- good quality affordable housing units
- balanced social mix
- good community interaction (clubs, organisation etc.)
- high quality historic heritage
- balanced industrial, service and tertiary employment mix.

The term ‘quality of life’ is used here in a broad sense to describe the conditions that contribute to a sustainable quality of life experienced by residents of the county. It is a multi-dimensional concept that embraces issues related to:

- cost of housing
- journey to work
- availability of childcare
- the quality of the natural environment and the cultural heritage
- the availability of health services and other forms of social supports and protection
- provision of recreation and leisure facilities
- parity of access to information.

Most of the topics discussed in previous chapters are also relevant to this concept especially access to education, range and quality of employment opportunities, settlement patterns which affect travel to work times, spatial segregation of social classes, and initiatives to overcome barriers to social inclusion. In the remainder of this chapter data are presented on a number of indicators that can be related to the above issues. Due to gaps in the data available a comprehensive analysis for all parts of the county is not feasible.
In the future, it is hoped that these gaps in the data can be overcome. For the present the analysis is largely dependent proxy measures using CSO data.

6.2 HOUSING

6.2.1 The role of the Local Authority

Local authorities have a wide remit with regard to housing. In addition to the provision of housing their function includes the planning of housing and the provision of services such as water and sewerage. In recent years, local authorities have gained new responsibilities in relation to planning for the implementation of national housing policy at local level.

Each local authority is required to prepare a housing strategy under Part V of the Planning and Development Act, 2000-2004. The strategy contains estimates on the housing need over a six-year period, together with details of how these needs will be met by the local authority itself, the private sector, and the voluntary and co-operative sector.

The Housing Strategy forms part of the development plan and it is through the development plan that the local authority seeks to ensure that there is adequate zoned land for residential purposes. Kildare County Council has recently carried out a review of its County Development Plan and consequently, its Housing strategy. The current Housing Strategy (2005) requires 8% of zoned residential land for social housing and 12% for affordable housing. The Housing Strategy analysis suggested that on average about 30% of new households are likely to experience an affordability difficulty.

For many people today the cost of housing is a major concern. Local authorities have a responsibility to assist persons with a housing need but unable to pay the full market price. Kildare County Council provides housing to eligible persons, or assists them to provide housing from their own means in a variety of ways:

- Provision of social housing, ie rented accommodation;
- Provision of accommodation for homeless people, be it emergency, transitional or permanent;
- Support/facilitate voluntary housing bodies to provide social housing under the Capital Assistance and Rental Subsidy schemes;
- Improvement works in lieu – carry out remedial works to privately owned houses in lieu of local authority housing;
- Shared Ownership Scheme;
- Affordable housing
- Tenant purchase;
- Loans for house purchase and improvements
- Low Cost Sites Scheme
- Mortgage Allowance Scheme
- Disabled persons grants
- Essential repairs grants.
For those who can afford to purchase their own house a major element in the cost is the value of the site, which is influenced by market trends. The Local Authorities through their Development Plans seek to ensure that there is adequate supply of land zoned for residential development. Volume I of the County Development Plan sets out in detail the strategies for residential development in both rural and urban areas. The County Development Plan (and the Development Plans for Clane, Maynooth, Kilcock, Celbridge and so on) sets out the strategies for residential development in urban and rural areas. In 2004, it was calculated that within the County, there was in excess of 2,700 acres of undeveloped land zoned for residential purposes.

This land is principally available in Naas and Newbridge as the designated Large Growth Towns and in Maynooth, Leixlip, Celbridge, Kilcock, Kildare, Monasterevin, Kilcullen and Athy which are designated as Moderate Growth Towns under the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area (2004). The development of this land is subject to the provision of the necessary physical and social infrastructure. It is recognised that the increase in the housing stock and household units needs a greater balance whereby the continued growth is matched by employment generation, improvements in the provision of social infrastructure and ultimately the quality of life enjoyed by the residents. Apart from slight dips in 2000 and 2003, housing completions in the county have increased steadily over the past number of years as set out in the following table.

**Table 22: House Completions 1999-2004**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total house completions</td>
<td>2,419</td>
<td>2,366</td>
<td>2,426</td>
<td>3,126</td>
<td>2,971</td>
<td>3,479</td>
<td>3,584</td>
<td>20,371</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Dept. of Environment, Heritage & Local Government

The Housing Strategy (2001) estimated that 8,174 houses would be constructed between 2004 and 2006, approximately 2,725 per annum. The projected household formation in County Kildare of 14,630 additional households between 2003-2010 as recommended in the Regional Planning Guidelines (2004) amounts to approximately 1,829 additional units per annum. This would recommend a considerable slowing down in the county to pre-2000 rates. It is accepted that the current rate of house completions will not be sustainable indefinitely into the future and will start to decline, but not to the rates projected in the Regional Planning Guidelines.

**6.2.2 Housing and households**

The total number of households in Kildare in 2002 was 50,477, with an average of 3.2 persons per household. Of the total Kildare population, 156,916 people, or 97.7% were living in permanent households, including conventional houses and flats/apartments. Just over 400 people (0.2%) were living in temporary households and 93.0% of the population in 2002 resided in conventional houses.

The highest percentages of people living in flats or apartments tended to be mainly associated with the more densely populated parts of the county, namely the more urban, and to some extent the more north eastern parts. Newbridge Urban ED had by far the highest proportion living in flats or apartments (15.2%).
QUALITY OF LIFE

Other EDs with relatively high levels included Kildare (9.7%), Athy West Urban (8.5%), Clane (7.8%), Maynooth (7.5%), Ballitore (7.2%) and Naas Urban (7.1%). Many areas of Kildare had relatively few, or no, people living in flats or apartments. These EDs were generally in the more rural parts of the county.

6.2.3 Housing tenure

Compared to the State the proportion of housing in Kildare that is owner occupied is high (79% vs 73.9%). Kildare also has a lower proportion of local authority housing, with just 7.6% compared to 10.4% for the State (Table 23). The spatial pattern of owner occupied housing (including mortgaged and non-mortgaged categories) at ED level is not particularly pronounced.

Table 23: Housing Tenure: Kildare compared with State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Households</th>
<th>Kildare</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owner Occupied (mortgaged)</td>
<td>25,963</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>484,774</td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner Occupied (no mortgage)</td>
<td>13,592</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>461,166</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Authority (purchase)</td>
<td>1,499</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>44,783</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Authority (rented)</td>
<td>2,295</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>88,206</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Rented</td>
<td>4,588</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>141,459</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupied Free of Rent</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>21,560</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: Census of Population, 2002, CSO

More distinct spatial patterns emerge if this category is considered in terms of mortgaged and non-mortgaged owner-occupied housing. High levels of mortgaged housing are particularly associated with the main commuter areas in the north-east and in the hinterlands of Naas, Newbridge and Rathangan (Map 91). The strong association between mortgaged owner occupied housing and population increase confirms that large numbers among the new population in Kildare are owner-occupiers rather than renters. In this way Kildare differs in its growth pattern from Dublin Inner City, but is similar to other growth areas in the more rural parts of the Dublin commuter belt. The lowest proportions of mortgaged owner occupied housing tended to be found in the south-western and western parts of the county, as well as in the older centres of some of the larger settlements, including Newbridge and Athy. EDs with high proportions of people living in mortgaged housing in 2002 included Celbridge (69.3%), Bodenstown (66.4%), Thomastown (66.2%), Morristownbiller (63.2%), Naas Rural (62.3%), Kill (62.0%), Clane (61.8%) and Leixlip (60.7%). Low levels of mortgaged housing were associated with Ballitore (18.0%), Grangemellon (26.2%), Burtown (28.6%), Athy West Urban (29.1%), Castledermot (30.0%), Skerries (30.5%), Killashee (31.0%), Kilberry (31.2%), Rathangan (31.2%) and Harristown (31.7%).

Owner-occupied housing without a mortgage is concentrated in three different, mainly rural, clusters in the county including the north-west, the eastern area south of Naas and the area of the county south of Kilcullen. Areas with low levels of non-mortgaged owner occupied housing relative to the rest of the county include a number of EDs in the commuter belt area of the north-east, the outskirts of Naas, Newbridge, Kildare, Athy town centre and the hinterlands of Rathangan in the west.
As expected, the centres of the towns of Maynooth, Newbridge, Naas, Athy, Kildare and Leixlip have the highest percentages of people living in private rented housing. Almost one-quarter of the population of Maynooth are living in private rented housing, as are 16.6% in Newbridge, 16.4% in Ballysax East and 13.6% in Naas Urban. The proportions living in private rented housing tend to be smaller in the remainder of the county although relatively high levels were associated with the EDs of Monasterevin (9.8%), Morrístownbiller (9.0%), Pollardstown (8.4%), Clane (8.4%), Kilcullen (8.0%) and Kilcock (8.0%). Local authority rented housing accounted for a large proportion of the rented housing sector in EDs such as Killinthomas, Ballitore, Athy West Urban, Grangemellon, Rathangan, Castledermot, Dunmanoge and Skerries. Map 92 illustrates the EDs with particularly high levels of their populations living in rented housing, both private and local authority rented. These included Athy West Urban (27.4%), Newbridge Urban (27.1%), Maynooth (25.6%), Ballysax East (22.7%), Rathangan (22.2%), Ballitore (21.5%), Killinthomas (21.1%), Athy East Urban (18.5%) and Skerries (18.3%).

Local authority housing, including both purchased and rented local authority housing accounts for more than ten per cent of the housing stock in nineteen EDs in Kildare. Seven of these EDs had more than twenty per cent local authority housing including Athy West Urban (30.1%), Killinthomas (26.3%), Ballitore (24.1%), Kilberry (23.6%), Rathangan (22.0%), Grangemellon (21.5%) and Skerries (21.4%). Other EDs with high proportions of local authority housing included Castledermot (18.2%), Newbridge Urban (18.0%), Ballysax West (17.3%), Carbury (16.8%), Timahoe South (15.9%), Athy East Urban (15.6%), Kilmeage South (15.0%) and Kildare (15.0%). As shown in Map 93 high levels of local authority rented housing were in Killinthomas (18.4%), Ballitore (18.0%), Athy West Urban (15.5%), Grangemellon (15.1%), Rathangan (14.9%), Castledermot (12.1%), Dunmanoge (11.8%), Skerries (11.5%), Carbury (10.9%) and Newbridge Urban (10.5%). Kilberry (16.6%), Athy West Urban (14.6%), Skerries (9.9%), Ballysax West (8.2%), Killinthomas (7.9%), Newbridge Urban (7.5%) and Rathangan (7.1%) were the EDs with highest proportions of their populations living in local authority purchased housing in 2002.

6.2.4 Age of housing

Table 24 shows that, on average, the housing stock in Kildare is relatively newer than that in the rest of the State. While 44.4% of the housing stock in the State was constructed before the 1970s, just 19.58% of the current housing stock in Kildare had been constructed at this stage. During the 1970s, however, there was a major surge in housing construction in Kildare, as well as the State, with more than one-fifth of the current Kildare housing stock being built during this period. Housing development declined over the following fifteen years in Kildare, as it did throughout the State, to about 80% of the levels achieved throughout the 1970s. However, the period since 1996 has seen a huge surge in housing construction in Kildare with more than a quarter of the 2002 housing stock having been constructed in the previous six years. This rate was much greater than the rate achieved in the State over the same period, as illustrated in Table 24.
Table 24: Age of Housing: Kildare compared with the State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Kildare</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Built Before 1919</td>
<td>3,468</td>
<td>7.21</td>
<td>167,033</td>
<td>13.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built 1919-1940</td>
<td>2,333</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>114,304</td>
<td>9.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built 1941-1960</td>
<td>3,617</td>
<td>7.52</td>
<td>146,206</td>
<td>11.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built 1961-1970</td>
<td>3,376</td>
<td>7.02</td>
<td>114,010</td>
<td>9.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built 1971-1980</td>
<td>9,691</td>
<td>20.15</td>
<td>216,497</td>
<td>17.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built 1981-1990</td>
<td>7,890</td>
<td>16.41</td>
<td>170,403</td>
<td>13.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built 1991-1995</td>
<td>5,307</td>
<td>11.03</td>
<td>94,199</td>
<td>7.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Built 1996 and after</td>
<td>12,411</td>
<td>25.81</td>
<td>197,134</td>
<td>16.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: Census of Population, 2002, CSO

The EDs with the highest concentrations of older housing – that is housing constructed prior to World War II – tend to be generally concentrated around the main urban centres as well as areas in the south west of the county around Monasterevin, Edenderry and Rathangan. The lowest proportions of older housing stock are associated with areas in the western parts of the county and the very south. EDs that had high proportions of their housing constructed before 1941 included Inchaquir (51.9%), Johnstown (42.9%), Carrick (40.6%), Killashee (39.3%) and Kilkea (39.1%).

There was not a significant level of housing development in Kildare in the 1941-1960 period, as illustrated in Table 24, with development levels still relatively low in the commuter belt areas apart from Leixlip. The main areas of development were around Naas, Kildare, Newbridge and Athy. Housing built during this period accounts for more than twenty per cent of housing stock in only one ED – Robertstown (33.4%). High levels relative to the rest of Kildare were also observed in the EDs of Athy West Urban (19.5%), Ballysax West (19.2%), Castledermot (18.5%), Kilkea (18.1%), Ballybackan (17.3%), Athy Rural (16.4%) and Johnstown (16.3%). The variation in the proportion of housing built before 1960 is summarised in Map 94 which clearly illustrates the contrast between the north and south of the county.

Housing development between 1960 and 1990 in Kildare was particularly concentrated in the north-east of the county as well as around the major urban centres. More than 50% of the housing in a number of EDs including Kilteel (56.3%), Feighcullen (56.3%), Straffan (53.1%) and Donaghcumper (50.5%), were constructed over the 1960-1990 period. Over 60% of the housing stock in 2002 in the Leixlip and Kilberry EDs was constructed over the 1960-90 period (Map 95), with levels of 70.9% in Leixlip and 60.4% in Kilberry. EDs which had relatively low proportions of housing construction during this period included areas in the hinterlands of Naas as well as parts of the west and south of the county including Naas Rural (17.5%), Thomastown (20.8%), Bodenstown (20.9%), Robertstown (24.8%) and Graney (25.4%).
Almost 37% of housing in Kildare in 2002 had been built in the previous twelve-year period, as illustrated in Table 24, and an electoral division level analysis shows that this construction was particularly concentrated in the commuter belt areas (Map 96). These areas include Maynooth, Celbridge, the hinterlands of Naas, Clane and Newbridge, Derrinturn and the hinterlands of Rathangan as well as more rural areas located near key route-ways through the county, such as Sunacroft. More than 40% of the 2002 housing stock in a number of EDs in these areas was constructed during the 1991-2002 period including Kilcock (49.9%), Thomastown (48.5%), Naas Urban (48.0%), Windmill Cross (47.0%), Killinthomas (46.4%), Maynooth (46.3%), Celbridge (44.9%), Kill (44.5%), Ballyshannon (44.2%) and Morristownbiller (42.4%). In addition, more than 50% of the housing stock in the EDs of Bodenstown (63.4%), Naas Rural (62.8%), Clane (56.0%) and Downings (51.0%) were constructed in the 1991-2002 period. This period, however, accounts for relatively low levels of housing development in other parts of the county, with it accounting for less than 15 per cent of housing developments in areas south of Newbridge, Kildare and Naas as well as many rural areas in the south of the county. Less than ten per cent of housing developments were constructed during this period in the ED of Ballaghmoon (9.9%).

In this way, there are considerable differences across Co. Kildare in terms of the age of the housing stock and the periods within which the most significant housing developments took place, as illustrated in Figure 7. Much of the developments in rural southern Kildare had been constructed before the 1960s, as is the case with Castledermot ED. Housing developments during the 1960-90 period accounted for the largest proportion of housing stock in areas of the north east of the county as Dublin’s metropolis began to seep into north Kildare, for example, Leixlip ED. The areas experiencing the highest levels of development in the 1990s were the environs of main towns such as Naas and Newbridge, as well as the commuter areas in the north-east, including Maynooth ED as shown in Figure 7. In addition, a large proportion of the housing stock in the EDs of Maynooth and Kildare town were constructed over the decade before the 2002 Census, synonymous with a rapid expansion of the housing stock over a very short period of time.

**Figure 7:** Pie charts showing the proportion of housing constructed over different time-periods for selected EDs
6.2.5 One-off housing

Private housing units that are classified as detached and serviced by a septic tank are taken as a proxy indicator of one-off rural dwellings. In 2002 almost two thirds (60.9%) of the total housing stock, in Kildare were in the form of one-off rural dwellings. This is a much higher percentage than the 35.6% for the State, reflecting the comparatively lower level of urbanisation in Kildare. As Map 97 illustrates, one-off housing is mainly associated with the more rural EDs. By contrast, the lowest levels of one-off housing were associated with the main urban centres in the county and in the rapidly growing commuter-belt in the north-east of the county.

One-off housing accounted for a much higher proportion of the total housing in earlier decades. More than forty per cent (40.7%) of the one-off rural dwellings in Kildare were constructed before 1971. Map 98 shows that throughout much of the south and north-west of the county more than 50% of the one-off rural dwellings enumerated in 2002 had been built prior to 1971. The growth in population in the 1970s was accompanied by a housing boom especially towards the north-east of the county and in the hinterlands of Newbridge, Naas, Kilcullen, Robertstown and Athy (Map 99). Approximately 17.9% of the one-off housing units in Kildare were built during the 1970s. The 1980s witnessed a continuation of one-off rural housing building especially in the middle of the county and on the outskirts of the commuter belt (Map 100). Overall there was a slight reduction in the volume of construction in this decade which accounts for 15.8% of the one-off housing stock. The proportion of housing units constructed in the early nineties was far less than in the eighties (7.5% compared to 15.8%) and there was also a significant move away from the east and northeast towards the west of the county especially in the period after 1996 (Maps 101 & 102).
MAP 91: MORTGAGED HOUSING AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL HOUSES, 2002

Transport
- Railway
- Motorway
- Primary Roads
- Secondary Roads

Towns By Pop.
- > 10,000
- 3,000 - 9,999
- < 3,000

Percentage
- < 32
- 32 - 40
- 40 - 47
- 47 - 55
- > 55

Average = 44.12
Std. Dev = 10.28

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Data Source: Central Statistics Office Population Census SAPS file 2002
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Kildare County Development Board
Rural-Urban Dynamics in Kildare: Socio-economic Patterns and Trends
MAP 92: TOTAL RENTED ACCOMMODATION AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL HOUSES, 2002

[Map showing the distribution of rented accommodation as a percentage of total houses in Kildare County, with percentage ranges indicated by different colors and towns marked by symbols.]

Kildare County Development Board
Rural-Urban Dynamics in Kildare: Socio-economic Patterns and Trends
MAP 94: HOUSES BUILT PRE 1960 AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL HOUSES, 2002
MAP 97: ONE OFF HOUSES AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL HOUSES, 2002
MAP 98: ONE OFF HOUSES BUILT PRE 1971 AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL HOUSES, 2002

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Ireland Kildare 2004/07 CCMA
Data Source: Central Statistics Office Population Census SAPS file 2002
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Transport
- Railway
- Secondary Roads
- Motorway
- Primary Roads

Towns By Pop.
- > 10,000
- 3,000 - 9,999
- < 3,000

Percentage
- < 7
- 7 - 14
- 14 - 17
- 17 - 21
- > 21

Average = 15.81
Std. Dev = 5.30

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Data Source: Central Statistics Office Population Census SAPS file 2002
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MAP 102: ONE OFF HOUSES BUILT 1996 OR LATER AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL HOUSES, 2002

Transport
- Railway
- Motorway
- Primary Roads
- Secondary Roads

Towns By Pop.
- > 10,000
- 3,000 - 9,999
- < 3,000

Percentage
- < 8
- 8 - 13
- 13 - 17
- 17 - 22
- > 22

Average = 16.57
Std. Dev = 5.83

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Ireland Kildare 2004/07 CSOMA Data Source: Central Statistics Office Population Census SAPS file 2002 © Government of Ireland, Ordnance Survey Ireland & NIRSA

Kildare County Development Board
Rural-Urban Dynamics in Kildare: Socio-economic Patterns and Trends
Increasingly for many people the distance and duration of their journey to work is becoming a source of concern and is something which impacts on the quality of their lives. This trend since the late 1990s is particularly relevant to Kildare given the extent of commuting to workplaces outside the county, particularly to Dublin. The Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) from the Census provide an opportunity to map the dominant modes of transport used for journeys to work and school/college as well as the distances and journey times to workplaces.

### 6.3 Modes of transport

The motor car is the dominant mode of transport accounting for 56.8% of trips made to work and school or college. For journeys to work, cars plus vans or lorries accounted for 61.4% of all trips. Almost half (48.9%) of the children aged 5-12 years are taken to school by car as are 28.1% of second level students. More than 1,200 third level students in 2002 travelled to college on a daily basis by car. Unfortunately the small area census data does not distinguish between modes of transport for work and education related trips. Almost 57% of all trips are by car and this is particularly the case in the hinterlands of Naas, east of Newbridge, in the hinterlands of Athy and in districts south east of Kildare town and north of Carlow. This contrasts with the much lower values in much of the north-east as well as areas around Kildare town, Monasterevin, east of Athy as well as Athy town centre (Map 103). The EDs with the highest percentages travelling to work or school by car are Oughterard (72.9%), Ladytown (71.3%), Ballaghmoor (69.2%), Churchtown (68.9%), Donore (68.5%), Inchaquire (68.3%) and Giltown (68.2%). In Kildare, districts where car passengers account for relatively high proportions of the total travelling include Quinsborough (30.4%), Ladytown (29.9%), Churchtown (29.5%), Oughterard (28.8%), Graney (28.6%), Carnalway (27.6%) and Johnstown (27.3%). Car passengers account for particularly low proportions of the total number travelling to work or school by car in the Leixlip (10.6%), Belan (10.9%), Narraghmore (11.0%), Maynooth (11.9%), Athy West Urban (12.4%), Kiltheel (12.7%), Kildangan (12.9%), Burtown (13.2%) and Newbridge Urban (13.4%) EDs.

### Table 25: Journey to Work or School: Kildare compared with the State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kildare</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journey to Work: Foot</td>
<td>17,133 (15.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journey to Work: Bicycle</td>
<td>2,430 (2.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journey to Work: Bus</td>
<td>13,546 (11.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journey to Work: Train</td>
<td>3,971 (3.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journey to Work: Motor Car (Driver)</td>
<td>45,670 (40.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journey to Work: Motor Car (Passenger)</td>
<td>18,845 (16.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journey to Work: Leave Before 7.00am</td>
<td>14,306 (13.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journey to Work: Leave 7.00-8.00am</td>
<td>30,680 (28.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journey to Work: Travel 60+ Minutes</td>
<td>16,055 (14.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journey to Work: Travel 90+ Minutes</td>
<td>4,961 (4.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journey to Work: Travel 15+ Miles</td>
<td>28,204 (25.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journey to Work: Travel 30+ Miles</td>
<td>7,903 (7.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data Source: Census of Population, 2002, CSO.*
The percentage of journeys to work or school by bus/coach or train is much smaller accounting for just 15.4% of the total. The majority of these are work trips (9.4%). The highest percentages using bus or train to get to work or school/college are in the north east along the main train lines, a band across the south of the county which stretches from just north of Athy to Ballitore and a number of more rural districts in the west of the county where most second level students travel by bus (Map 104). EDs where high proportions use buses to travel to work or school include Narraghmore (24.7%), Kilteel (24.4%), Ballybackan (24.4%), Ballitore (24.3%), Timahoe South (24.9%), Kilmeague South (23.1%) and Fontstown (21.0%). The lowest proportions were observed in Pollardstown (2.5%), Athy East Urban (3.6%), Athy West Urban (5.2%), Athy Rural (5.5%), Kilcock (6.0%) and Churchtown (6.4%).

Almost 4,000 people travel to work or school/college by train illustrating that Kildare is quite well served by the rail network. There are stations in Leixlip, Maynooth, Kilcock, Hazelhatch (Celbridge), Sallins, Newbridge, Kildare, Monasterevin and Athy. Maynooth with thirty-two train journeys to Dublin Connolly station every day during the week and Sallins with twenty-five train journeys to Dublin Heuston every day are the stations best served. The influence of these train stations is readily apparent when examining the spatial dispersion of people who travel to work in Kildare. Relatively higher proportions of people travel to work by train in a cluster of EDs centred around Maynooth, Naas and Kildare town. EDs with relatively high percentages of their populations travelling to work by train include Naas Rural (9.8%), Bodenstown (7.9%), Leixlip (7.3%), Dunmurry (6.9%), Maynooth (6.9%) and Kildare (6.6%). The proposed improvements to the Kildare route as well as improvements advocated for the Waterford line will obviously result in far greater numbers travelling to work by train in the south of the county over the coming years. This will be a welcome improvement to the accessibility of the south of the county.

6.3.2 Travel times

Three travel categories were covered by the 2002 Census in relation to journey to work: time of departure, time spent travelling, and miles travelled in the journey to work. Such factors are especially interesting in the case of Kildare, given its increasing role as a commuter county for people who travel to Dublin daily for work. Table 25 reflects this, illustrating that Kildare people are proportionally more likely to be leaving for work earlier, to be spending longer times in travelling to work, and to be travelling longer distances than the national averages.

Approximately 17.5% of journey to work trips are of less than five miles distance with more than a quarter (25.6%) between 5 and 15 miles. Thus, 43.1% of those at work travel less than 15 miles to their place of work. Short distance trips are most common in the extreme north-east of the county, in the very south of the county near Carlow and in an area just north of Newbridge (Map 105). The highest incidences of persons travelling 15-29 miles to work are strongly concentrated in the north-east of the county (Map 106). Journeys of more than 30 miles account for 7.1% of all work trips. In the west of the county and in some districts south of Kildare and Newbridge proportions are often well above this average reaching more than 20% in some EDs (Map 107). In the case of Athy and areas close to the railway lines in the west of the county there are daily train services which may account for some of the long distance commuters.
The duration of the journey to work measured in minutes may be a more useful concept when considering journey to work as it takes account of delays associated with congestion on the roads. Almost two-fifths of the workforce reaches their destination within 15 minutes of leaving home and a further 25.4% arrive between 15:30 minutes. Conversely, 14.8% of journeys are of more than one hour duration, while 4.6%, involving almost 5,000 workers, spend more than 90 minutes commuting to work each day.

High proportions of short duration journey times are confined to the rural hinterlands of urban areas like the area south of Newbridge and the areas around Kildare, Athy, Castledermot and Rathangan (Map 108). Journeys of 15-30 minutes duration are most common in the area south of Kildare and north-east of Athy and in the northern hinterlands of Newbridge (Map 109). Journeys of 30-59 minutes exhibit a very different pattern with strong concentrations in the north-east of the county as well as clusters in the north-west of the county (Map 110). Long distance commuters, making journeys of between 60-90 minutes duration are generally concentrated in a band of EDs that stretches from Leixlip to Naas as well as a number of outlier EDs in the west of the north-west of the county close to the Offaly and Meath borders (Map 111). Very long distance commuters, making journeys in excess of 90 minutes are generally scattered in clusters of EDs along the west of the county as well as a couple of districts in the very south and also east of Naas. Related to the length of journey times is the time people leave their homes in the morning with 13.2% leaving before 7.00 am and a further 13.5% leaving between 7.00 and 7.30 am.

It is likely that such lengthy commutes to jobs (largely) outside the county is causing very long days and as such is impacting on the quality of life for these commuters. Perhaps some further research into commuting patterns and the skills base of this workforce is warranted in the future with the aim of providing information which could suggest realistic alternatives to long-distance commuting.
MAP 103: PERSONS TRAVELLING TO WORK & SCHOOL/COLLEGE BY CAR AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL TRAVELLING TO WORK & SCHOOL/COLLEGE, 2002
MAP 104: PERSONS TRAVELLING TO WORK & SCHOOL/COLLEGE BY BUS OR TRAIN AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL TRAVELLING TO WORK & SCHOOL/COLLEGE, 2002

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MAP 105: PERSONS TRAVELLING LESS THAN 15 MILES TO WORK AS A PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS 15+ AT WORK 2002

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MAP 106: PERSONS TRAVELLING 15 - 29 MILES TO WORK
AS A PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS 15+ AT WORK 2002

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MAP 107: PERSONS TRAVELLING 30+ MILES TO WORK AS A PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS 15+ AT WORK 2002
MAP 108: PERSONS SPENDING <15 MINUTES TRAVELLING TO WORK AS A PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS 15+ AT WORK 2002
MAP 109: PERSONS SPENDING 15-29 MINUTES TRAVELLING TO WORK AS A PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS 15+ AT WORK 2002
MAP 111: PERSONS SPENDING 60-89 MINUTES TRAVELLING TO WORK AS A PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS 15+ AT WORK 2002
MAP 112: PERSONS SPENDING 90+ MINUTES TRAVELLING TO WORK
AS A PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS 15+ AT WORK 2002

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Rural-Urban Dynamics in Kildare: Socio-economic Patterns and Trends
QUALITY OF LIFE

6.4 CHILDCARE

The availability or non-availability of childcare facilities is another factor that contributes to quality of life. The unavailability of childcare can contribute to social exclusion arising from an inability to participate in the workforce outside the home. Under the Government’s National Development Plan childcare was identified as a priority and most recently (January 2006) the Government proposed an annual €1,000 payment to parents per child in recognition of the increasing burden of childcare costs.

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform introduced the ‘Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (2000-2006)’ to fund the development of childcare in Ireland while seeking to ensure that existing childcare services are not displaced by the introduction of new initiatives in the childcare area. The main objectives of this programme are:

- To maintain and support service provision
- To improve the quality of childcare in Ireland
- To increase the number and range of childcare facilities and childcare places
- To introduce a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of childcare services.

Under this plan County & City Childcare Committee’s have been established to co-ordinate Childcare Services and promote a cross-agency co-operation in the delivery of Childcare Services at local level. In Kildare the committee was set up in 2001 and since its establishment €8,248,909 funding has been approved to-date for childcare in County Kildare. This has created 689 new childcare places. Childminders also receive funding and €63,000 has been allocated to Kildare in the form of Childminding Development Grants. There are no figures to-date on the numbers attending Childminding services but Kildare County Childcare Committee (KCCC) are undertaking some research over the coming year which should provide an insight into this area. Map 113 illustrates the locations of current childcare provision throughout the county, based on figures from the HSE South Western Area. This is likely to be somewhat of an underestimation, however, as it does not take into account those who may provide a childminding service but are not a registered childcare facility.

According to a survey of parents and childcare providers carried out for Kildare County Childcare Committee in 2001 70% of families felt that the current childcare services on offer in County Kildare did not meet their needs (KCCC 2001). Almost two-thirds (61.9%) of parents interviewed had difficulties accessing paid childcare services. Further, many parents were unaware of the supports that exist in their locality and trying to get information about services on offer locally had caused difficulties for 64% of families.

More than two-thirds (64%) of childcare providers interviewed had more demand than they could supply and a majority cited planning restrictions as the major reason that prevented services operating at full capacity. Another difficulty identified by childcare providers was accessing operational funding (current expenditure as opposed to capital expenditure).
6.5 QUALITY OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The concept of sustainable development has at its core the idea that development aimed to meet the needs of the current generation must not reduce the capacity of the environment to sustain the needs of future generations. In effect all development actions need to take account of their potential environmental impacts. There are a number of areas in Kildare that are particularly important from an environmental perspective. These include seven Special Areas Of Conservation and 23 Natural Heritage Areas (Maps 114 & 115). Full details on each of these Areas are in Volume two of the County Development Plan (Council 2005).

6.5.1 Landscape

The rural parts of the county have been analysed by the Local Authority planners for their visual characteristics with a view to assisting developers and others who need to have regard to the sensitivity of different types of development in parts of the rural landscape where there are differing capacities to absorb development. Five types of Landscape Character Areas are identified on the basis of their visual quality and the particular sensitivities of each are identified in the Development Plan (2005). The five types of areas identified are:

- Upland areas
- Lowland areas
- Transition areas
- River valleys & water corridors
- Other landscape units.

6.5.2 Water quality

The quality of the river waters in Kildare is monitored by the County Council Environment Section. Kildare County Council is a partner in the Three River Basin District Projects, which were established as part of Ireland’s response to the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD). The WFD is law in Ireland since December 2003. Three river basin districts (RBD) are the Eastern RBD, the Shannon RBD and the North-South RBD. Approximately half of Kildare lies within the Eastern RBD Area. Basically, the WFD aims to provide a new comprehensive framework for the management of water resources and quality in the future to achieve “good ecological status” as required by the WFD. The term ‘good ecological status’ is applied to waters suitable for sustaining natural aquatic ecosystems, which are unaffected or only slightly impacted by human activity. In Kildare, the RBD Projects will draw on the experience gained by Kildare’s participation in the recently completed EU funded Three Rivers Project.

Nationally, water quality monitoring began in Ireland in 1971 and since then there has been a steady decline in the quality of Ireland’s rivers and lakes. The national trend is reflected in the data collected for the river Liffey. The Eastern River Basin District, which encompasses Co. Kildare has the lowest proportion of unpolluted channel of all the River Basin Districts. This can be largely explained by the fact that this is the most densely populated and developed region. The deterioration in water quality nationally in recent years has resulted from an increase in the total phosphorous load. This is mainly related to intensive farming practices and inadequately treated municipal waste-water. A management strategy has been prepared that will seek to reduce the extent of pollution through a combination of enforcement of codes of good practice.
QUALITY OF LIFE

in all sectors (urban and rural) and promotion of awareness of the environmental hazards associated with certain activities. The overall objective is to restore the water system to ‘good ecological status’ as defined above.

6.5.3 Waste management

The disposal of waste material can impact very negatively on the quality of the environment if it is not carefully managed. Recycling is obviously a key component of any strategy for a sustainable approach to waste management. Kildare County Council has already established recycling facilities in Kilcullen and Athy. The Council also proposes to increase the number of sites and diversity of material at Bring Centres, of which there are currently 37 (Map 116). The efforts of the Local Authority in relation to environmental management and enhancing environmental quality are complemented by activities supported throughout rural areas by Kildare LEADER.
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6.6 THE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Our heritage influences and enriches the character of our lives and is part of our identity. The Heritage Act (1995) defines heritage as including the following: monuments, archaeological objects, heritage objects, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, inland waterways, geology, landscapes, heritage parks, gardens, seascapes and wrecks.

Kildare has a very rich heritage of archaeological sites and monuments (Map 117), historical buildings, country houses and demesnes (see also Map 67) and vernacular buildings. In addition there are many items of industrial archaeological interest such as mills, canals, roads and rail bridges. All of these resources combine to provide social, educational, recreational, aesthetic and economic benefits to the county and thus contribute to the quality of life that can be experienced by Kildare residents. However, many of these resources are coming under increasing pressure as a result of the rapid development in many areas of the county and there is a need to ensure that a balance is struck between necessary developments and the safeguarding of our heritage. Heritage is particularly important in Ireland as it plays such a strong role in the tourism industry here.

In order to protect heritage for future generations it will be necessary to put in place appropriate management strategies. The importance of our heritage has been recognised by the Government with the publication of The National Heritage Plan (Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht & The Islands, 2002). The plan sets out a vision for heritage conservation and management. A key priority of the plan is the preparation of County Heritage Plans and the appointment of Heritage Officers within local authorities. In 2002, Kildare County Council, in partnership with the Heritage Council, appointed a Heritage Officer. It is the role of the Heritage Officer to facilitate the development and implementation of a 5-year Heritage Plan for County Kildare, a process that began in 2004. The Heritage Plan is a cross-agency county strategy for the identification, protection, conservation, management, enhancement and interpretation of the heritage.

The Census of Population provides data on the number of persons aged over three years who can speak Irish. The data provides a crude measure of competence (subjectively assessed) in relation to ability to speak the language but it does not provide any information on the level of usage of Irish on a regular basis. Map 118 shows that the highest proportions (approximately 50%) were in districts in the north-east of the county as well as a number of districts in the west and mid-west of the county. The high values in the north-east reflect the younger age profile and the higher educational levels of the population. Kildare does not have any official Gaeltacht areas.
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6.7 HEALTH

The quality of people’s health is clearly a major influence on the quality of their lives. The Health Services Executive South Western Area has overall responsibility for delivery of a very wide range of health care programmes and also for provision of facilities, general and specialist, to cater for the needs of the population. The activities of the HSE are complemented by a number of supports provided by the Department of Social, Family & Community Affairs.

6.7.1 Drugs

Recent years have brought increased availability and usage of drugs in Ireland. While it is difficult to assess actual drug usage in Kildare, proxy measures, such as, the numbers from Kildare who undergo treatment for drug abuse and the number of arrests for drug possession give a good indicator of levels of drug activity.

Figures from the Health Research Board (HRB) on treated drug users living in Kildare from 1998-2003 indicate that 510 persons from Kildare were treated during this period (Table 26).

Table 26: Drug users living in Kildare 1998-2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment Status</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Client</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Client</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Known</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>510</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HRB, 2005

Analysis of the age breakdown of this group reveals that the vast majority of those treated were aged between 15 and 24 (Table 27). Recent years have also seen an increase of those in older age groups (30-39) presenting for treatment. Table 27 further illustrates that treatments peaked in 2000.
Table 27: Drug users in Kildare: age-group and year treated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year treated</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>510</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HRB, 2005

In terms of gender, the majority of those treated during this period were males (Table 28).

Table 28: Drug users in Kildare: gender and year treated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year treated</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>502</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HRB, 2005

The main drug type that treatment was given for was Opiates, followed by Cannibis (Table 29).

Table 29: Drug users in Kildare: main problem drug and year treated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year treated</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opiates</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecstasy (and other mdma)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocaine</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amphetamines</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benzodiazepines</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volatile inhalants</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannibis</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other substances</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>510</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HRB, 2005
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Of those who used these drugs, 75% were polydrug users, that is, they used more than one type of drug. An interesting finding from this analysis is that more than 82% of drug users from Kildare were treated outside of Kildare (most likely Dublin) for their drug problems. Whether this is reflective of a lack of facilities in Kildare or merely proximity of services in Dublin is not clear. An analysis of where in the county those presenting for treatment were from, would provide more insight into this.

Data from the South West Regional Drugs Task Force gives an overview of drug related detections in some of the towns in Co. Kildare (Table 30). Overall, detections of Heroine usage are lowest in the county, followed by Cocaine and Ecstasy with Cannibas being the most common drug detected. In general detections were much more common in the larger urban areas like Athy, Kildare and Naas (however, this may be influenced by the location of Garda stations in these areas as opposed to where the detections had taken place). Naas in particular had peaks in 2003 for Cocaine, Ecstasy and Cannibas detection which was likely associated with a number of large outdoor concerts that took place in Punchestown that year. Detection figures for Maynooth seem quite low given that there is a large student population in the town. Unfortunately figures for Leixlip and Newbridge were not included in this dataset. Geocoding of both the HRB and the Drugs Task Force datasets would enable a more in-depth geographical analysis and would also illustrate whether there was a need for drug treatment facilities or targeted drugs education in particular areas. It is hoped that future collaborations with the HSE South Western Area and the County Research and Statistics Office will facilitate such an analysis.

Table 30: Overview of drug related detections in Kildare towns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballitore</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballymore Eustace</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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South Western Regional Drugs Task Force, 2005
Cancer incidence

Cancer incidence is quite an emotive issue. It is only in recent years that cancer incidence can be analysed on a sub-county level. Data from the National Cancer Registry Ireland (NCRI) and the ERHA (Eastern Regional Health Authority) indicates that there were 2,260 cancer incidences from 1994-2000 inclusive, in County Kildare. This analysis is based on primary malignant neoplasms only, excluding non-melanoma skin cancer, and using ED-coded data only. Because the age composition can vary between areas, and cancer incidence and mortality increases with advancing age, variations in crude incidence rates (the total number of new cases in the area per year divided by the population at risk) provide an unreliable measure for comparison between areas. Standardisation of morbidity rates makes allowances for differences in age composition of local populations so Standardised Incidence Ratios (SIRs) were calculated and plotted by the ERHA for each ED in Co. Kildare.

There are a number of facts that need to be taken into account when interpreting patterns of cancer incidence (NCRI, 2005):

- Cancer is more common than most people realise. Cancer is the second leading cause of death in Ireland, following heart disease. About 30% of Irish people now living will eventually have cancer. Over the years, cancer will strike about three out of four families.
- Cancer is not one disease. Cancer is a group of more than 100 diseases characterized by uncontrolled growth and spread of abnormal cells. Different types of cancer have different causes, different rates of occurrence, and different chances for survival. What turns a breast cell into breast cancer isn’t what turns a white blood cell into leukaemia. Therefore, we cannot assume all the different types of cancer in a community share a common cause.
- The risk of having cancer increases with age. While cancer occurs in people of all ages, cancer rates rise sharply among people over 45 years of age. When a community consists primarily of people over the age of 45, we would expect more cancer than in a more mixed area. We would expect even more cancer if most people were over the age of 60.
- While the exact cause of most cancers is unknown, the most common types of cancer are associated with lifestyle factors. Cancer may be caused by a variety of factors acting alone or together over many years. Scientists estimate that most cancers are associated with factors related to how we live, called lifestyle factors.
- Environmental factors account for a small percentage of all cancer deaths. Many people believe that cancer is usually caused by exposure to toxic substances in the environment but scientists estimate that fewer than 10%, and probably no more than 3-4% of cancer deaths are related to external environmental factors such as radiation and toxic chemicals.
- Cancers today are usually related to events that happened many years ago. Cancer does not develop immediately after contact with a carcinogen. Instead, there is often a long period, 15 to 30 years, between the exposure to a carcinogen and medical diagnosis of cancer. This makes it very difficult to track what caused the cancer.

Map 119 illustrates the pattern of cancer incidence for all cancers, excluding non-melanoma skin cancer in Kildare from 1994-2000. There were no EDs that had a Standardised Incidence Rate (SIR) that was significantly above what would be expected. However, a number of areas, for example, in the hinterlands of Athy and Naas had incidence rates that were significantly below expected.

Because there are eighty-nine EDs in Kildare and so many different types of cancer involved and given the random nature of cancer, the chances are that, in relative terms, there will be at least one ED which appears to have an elevated incidence of cancer. However, this does not say anything about the aetiology.
QUALITY OF LIFE

of the disease. Any elevated incidence could be due to the location of, for example, a nursing home in a particular ED but is most likely due to chance and not to any casual factor. In any case, however, there are no significant elevated clusters of cancer incidence in Kildare.

6.7.3 Care of the elderly
The demographic profile of the population is changing with increasing numbers of people living into old age. While most people will have an active and healthy old age, a sizeable minority of older people are likely to require special care as they grow old. Research indicates that many older people are in need of some care and some in need of considerable care. In addition, the growing need for there to be two earners in a household to meet economic demands, such as mortgages, means that there are fewer people in the home to take care of elderly persons full-time. Map 120 illustrates the location of nursing homes in the county (Kildare is incorporated into Community Care Area 9). If the locations of nursing homes in County Kildare are considered in the context of Maps 19 & 22, which illustrate the percentages of those aged over 65 and the elderly dependency ratio respectively, there seems to be a mismatch in service delivery for the elderly as there are higher proportions of elderly persons towards the south of the county but no nursing homes located in the vicinity, however, there is a geriatric unity in Athy hospital which may provide some services. Provision of specialised care of the elderly in the south of the county is something that may need to be addressed in the future.

6.8 SOCIAL SUPPORTS AND SECURITY

Over recent years there has been much concern over the provision of postal services in many rural areas. In addition to their primary function in relation to postal services the post office network is used for a wide variety of other services including:

- Department of Social, Community & Family Affairs payments;
- Television licence sales;
- Bill payments (e.g. Eircom, Bord Gais etc.);
- Money transfers
- Savings and investments
- National Lottery.

Rural post offices also serve as important meeting places for people who may have limited opportunities to visit the local village. Recent analysis has revealed that many post offices are loss-making operations and that the overall situation is likely to deteriorate further over the medium term. In order to maintain the rural network it will become increasingly necessary to generate new business. One option is that all government departments should be required to maximise the amount of their business that can be channelled through the rural network. There were 38 post offices in Kildare in 2005 (Map 121).

Personal security and concerns about the security of personal property are increasingly an issue that affects the quality of many people's lives. While the issue is relevant to almost all age groups it is particularly important for elderly people especially those living alone. There are 19 Garda stations dispersed throughout the county (Map 122).

Fire fighting is another important safety service provided by the Local Authority. There are six fire stations at strategic locations throughout the county (Map 123): Athy, Monasterevin, Leixlip, Newbridge, Naas and Maynooth.
MAP 119: STANDARDISED INCIDENCE RATIOS OF CANCER IN COUNTY KILDARE 1994-2000

Kildare County Development Board
Rural-Urban Dynamics in Kildare: Socio-economic Patterns and Trends
MAP 121: POST OFFICES IN COUNTY KILDARE
MAP 123: FIRE STATIONS IN COUNTY KILDARE
6.9 RECREATION AND LEISURE FACILITIES

The availability of recreation and leisure facilities can enhance the quality of life that people may experience in different parts of the county. Information on recreation and leisure facilities is limited due to the absence of a comprehensive database. Almost every village has facilities for some field-based sports. In addition there are 17 equestrian facilities (including three race courses, Goffs Bloodstock Sales and the Irish National Stud) and 20 golf courses. There are also a number of walking routes, such as, the towpath trails along the canals. There are public swimming pools in Naas, and Athy. Residents of Kildare have access to museums, theatres and art galleries in Newbridge, Kilcullen, Kilcock and Straffan. Through its County Arts Officer and on-going development of its library service (see below) the County Council plays a central role in the development of the cultural life in the community.

6.10 PARITY OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The more educated society has become, the greater has been the demand for access to information in a variety of formats. In order to cater for increasing numbers of readers there is a need for a well resourced and accessible library service. Kildare County Council supports the county public library service from its headquarters in Newbridge. There are, in addition, 16 branches throughout the county with only the very north-west appearing to be relatively poorly serviced, Map 124.

The arrival of information and communication technologies has brought about new ways of collecting and sharing information. If used properly the new technologies provide substantial opportunities for improving local democracy. Kildare County Council, through the implementation of the national policy “An ICT Vision for Local Government” has been to the forefront in ICT developments within the local government sector. The Draft Development Plan was placed on the Internet for the duration of the review period and Kildare County Councils website was short listed in 2005 for the Best Local Public Sector Website in the Eircom Golden Spiders Irish Internet Awards. The availability of Internet access at public venues will greatly expand the level of access to the widest possible range of information sources on a basis that has the potential to support a more inclusive society.

Initiatives to improve access to information in the county have been coupled with parallel initiatives to facilitate greater levels of citizen participation and the concerns of other stakeholders in decisions that affect different aspects of development. Through extensive adoption of the new partnership model in relation to a variety of complex tasks there has been a gradual transition towards a new form of governance that combines elements of both representative and participative democracy. The formation of the County Development Board is an important initiative in furthering this transition.
MAP 124: LIBRARIES IN COUNTY KILDARE