

2. RIGHT TO AN ADEQUATE STANDARD OF LIVING

Chapter Grade

D+



1 Family Ireland
@1familyireland



We respond to new #ESRI report that shows lone parents are most affected by consistent poverty <http://bit.ly/2iBZFmL>. Our most vulnerable families should not have to wait for action any longer #endchildpoverty



7 Dec 2017

Right to an Adequate Standard of Living

Every child has the right to a standard of living that is adequate to their development – physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social. While parents and guardians have the primary responsibility to provide for the child’s material needs, the State also has the responsibility to assist parents and guardians to alleviate poverty where needed.

Summary of Article 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child



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IN THE NEWS

13,000 BENEFIT FROM 10 YEARS OF PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION IN TALLAGHT WEST

InTallaght, 12 September 2017

13,000 children, parents and staff across Tallaght West have benefitted from a €22m investment in prevention and early intervention in the community over 10 years. Celebrating its 10 Year Anniversary at Tallaght's Civic Theatre yesterday, the Tallaght West based Childhood Development Initiative (CDI) thanked families and the community for their commitment to better outcomes for children – and called on Government to support continued prevention and early intervention for a further 10 years. (...) The programmes which were delivered included parental supports; children's literacy and numeracy; children's speech and language; training adults and young people in using restorative practices in schools and the community and strengthening community safety.

From 2007 to 2016 the outputs delivered in Tallaght West included:

- > 8,200 parents and adults, 3,800 children and 840 staff engaged with and supported
- > €21.7m invested in the community
- > Parental support to 4,500 families
- > Speech and Language Therapy to 820 children
- > Literacy and numeracy support to 1,440 children
- > Restorative practices training to 2,000 adults and 190 young people.

The work remains ongoing after a series of funding extensions and is resourced up to the middle of 2018 – and CDI today called for a longer term view and commitment from Government. (...)

2.1

Child and Family Homelessness**GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT**

A Programme for a Partnership Government commits to:

- > End the use of unsuitable long-term emergency accommodation for homeless families in part by providing 500 rapid-delivery housing units.



Progress: Limited

'Child and Family Homelessness' receives an 'E' grade in *Report Card 2018*. This grade reflects the fact that, despite efforts by Government to address the issue, family homelessness now constitutes a national emergency, with unprecedented numbers of children experiencing homelessness. The Government did not meet its own deadline of mid-2017 to end the use of unsuitable long-term emergency accommodation for families. The roll-out of family hubs has ameliorated the situation for some children but this form of emergency accommodation must be seen as a temporary measure and further investment in social and affordable housing is needed or the crisis is set to continue.

Every child has the right to a standard of living adequate for his or her physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.¹⁴⁹ The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires States to assist parents and guardians who are in need by providing 'material assistance and support programmes particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing'.¹⁵⁰ The UN

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has emphasised that the right to adequate housing goes beyond the provision of shelter and means housing that is accessible, habitable and affordable with certain 'facilities essential for health, security, comfort and nutrition'.¹⁵¹ Households should have legal security of tenure¹⁵² and States must take steps to prevent illegal evictions.¹⁵³ The right to housing also encompasses the obligation on States to 'progressively and to the extent allowed by their available resources, prevent and address homelessness; provide the physical infrastructure required for housing to be considered adequate ... ensure adequate housing to individuals or groups unable, for reasons beyond their control, to enjoy the right to adequate housing, notably through housing subsidies and other measures'.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, children as a priority group must be 'accorded full and sustainable access to adequate housing resources'.¹⁵⁵

In 2016, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed its concern regarding reports that families in Ireland affected by homelessness were 'facing significant delays in accessing social housing

149 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (20 November 1989) 1577 UNTS 3 (UNCRC) Art 27.

150 *ibid* Art 27(3).

151 UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 'General Comment No. 4 on the Right to Adequate Housing (Art 11(1) of the Covenant)' (1991) UN Doc E/1992/23 para 8(b).

152 *ibid* para 8(b).

153 *ibid* para 8(e).

154 UN Habitat, Factsheet No. 21 (Rev.1): The Right to Adequate Housing (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 2014) 34.

155 UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 'General Comment No. 4 on the Right to Adequate Housing (Art 11(1) of the Covenant)' (1991) UN Doc E/1992/23 para 8(e).

and frequently living in inappropriate, temporary or emergency accommodation on a long-term basis'.¹⁵⁶ The Committee called on the State to undertake measures to increase the availability of social housing and emergency housing support.¹⁵⁷

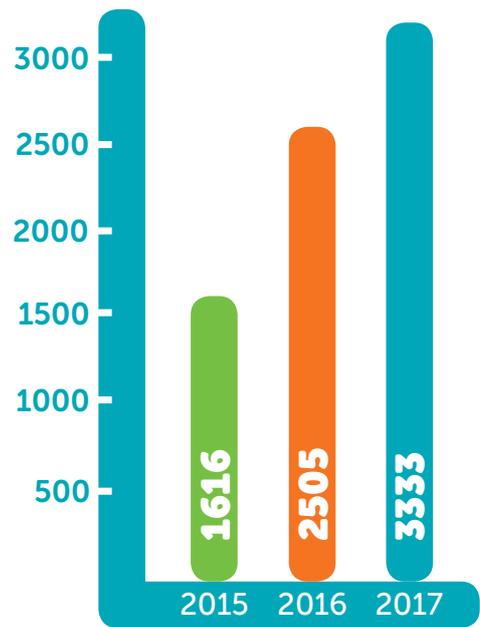
Homeless families and unsuitable accommodation:

The number of families with children recorded as homeless reached record levels in 2017: there were 1,530 families with 3,333 children living in emergency homeless accommodation in November 2017.¹⁵⁸ The majority of these families are based in Dublin but the number of homeless families with children outside Dublin has also increased significantly, from 177 families with 409 children in December 2016¹⁵⁹ to 342 families with 800 children in November 2017.¹⁶⁰ Lone parent families with children continue to be the largest cohort, representing 61 per cent of the total number of families living in emergency accommodation.¹⁶¹ In 2016, children under 18 represented more than a quarter of the population living in homeless accommodation while children four years and under made up the single largest age-category experiencing homelessness.¹⁶² No official figures exist to indicate the extent of 'hidden homelessness' – for example, where families and children are living in or sharing unsuitable and inappropriate private rented accommodation.¹⁶³

The original deadline set out in *Rebuilding Ireland: An Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness* (July 2016) to use 'emergency hotel and B&B type accommodation for families' only 'in limited circumstances' by mid-2017 was not met. In 2016, 3,000 adults moved out of homelessness into independent social housing or received support to enter the private rented sector;¹⁶⁴ a further 2,000 individuals moved out of homelessness in the first half

of 2017.¹⁶⁵ While both partners in a couple are counted in official exit statistics (for example, where they both sign a tenancy), the statistics do not count the number of children in these households. The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government should track the number of children who exit homelessness.

The outcomes of the unpublished review of *Rebuilding Ireland* informed a Housing Summit convened by Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, Eoghan Murphy TD, in September 2017.¹⁶⁶ A Homeless



NUMBER OF HOMELESS CHILDREN

156 UNCRRC 'Concluding Observations: Ireland' (2016) UN Doc CRC/C/IRL/CO/3-4 para 61.
 157 *ibid* para 62.
 158 Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 'Homelessness Report, November 2017' <<http://bit.ly/2zasOvh>> accessed 21 December 2017.
 159 Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, 'Emergency Accommodation Figures, December 2016' <<http://bit.ly/2keOobm>> accessed 4 February 2017.
 160 Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 'Homelessness Report, November 2017' <<http://bit.ly/2zasOvh>> accessed 21 December 2017.
 161 *ibid*.
 162 Central Statistics Office, 'Census of Population 2016 – Profile 5 Homeless Persons in Ireland' (CSO 2017).
 163 Where families have made an application to the relevant housing authority, the application is reflected in the social housing waiting lists and local authorities have detail available on the number of households that are classified as homeless while residing with friends or relatives. Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 4 December 2017.
 164 Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 'Overview of Activities and Structure' <<http://bit.ly/2j3eD5x>> accessed 20 September 2017.
 165 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 4 December 2017.
 166 *Rebuilding Ireland*, 'Minister Murphy announces outcomes from review of Rebuilding Ireland' <<http://bit.ly/2BralQk>> accessed 19 September 2017.

Inter-Agency Group 'to increase health supports in emergency accommodation and services and supports for families and children that are homeless',¹⁶⁷ established following the Housing Summit, has met three times to date.¹⁶⁸ The recruitment of a specialist National Director of Housing First to coordinate and drive 'a national, cross-Government housing-led approach to homelessness' and support delivery of housing-led approaches in line with the *Rebuilding Ireland* targets, is underway.¹⁶⁹ This is welcome as it may help to deliver a more cohesive approach to solving the housing shortage and homelessness crisis.

By July 2017, the roll-out of family supported accommodation facilities or 'family hubs'¹⁷⁰ began as a way of enabling families move out of unsuitable emergency hotel and B&B accommodation; the officially stated aim of this new form of accommodation is to provide 'a greater level of stability than is possible in hotel accommodation'.¹⁷¹ There are 11 hubs in operation nationwide, with six more expected to open by the end of 2017 to a further three in early 2018.¹⁷² The hubs support 300 families.¹⁷³ While some of the hubs have cooking facilities, others provide meals and families still do not have access to cooking facilities.¹⁷⁴ The move away from hotels and B&Bs is welcome, but it is essential that the hubs be considered a temporary form of accommodation so as to prevent institutionalisation¹⁷⁵ and to avoid the possibility that they could serve to 'normalise family homelessness' – a concern expressed by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.¹⁷⁶ Even where families are living in more stable emergency placements, children and young people may face difficulties in accessing play or recreational facilities due to accessibility,¹⁷⁷ affordability or availability¹⁷⁸ so they should be provided with

In 2017, Focus Ireland, with support from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of Health, commissioned a report which found that emergency homeless accommodation 'impacts negatively on families' daily food habits and dietary quality, not only in terms of what is consumed but also in how they prepared and ate their food'.

alternative recreational opportunities and access to local leisure facilities.

In 2017, Focus Ireland, with support from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of Health, commissioned a report which found that emergency homeless accommodation 'impacts negatively on families' daily food habits and dietary quality, not only in terms of what is consumed but also in how they prepared and ate their food'.¹⁷⁹ The research indicated that families in emergency accommodation were limited in their food options due to inadequate storage facilities as well as lack of access to cooking facilities.¹⁸⁰ Even where families could access a kitchen, many relied on convenience foods, high fat items and takeaways.¹⁸¹ Participants in the study described having to eat takeaways on beds and in some instances having to eat sitting on the floor.¹⁸² A coordinated approach to address food poverty is

167 *ibid.* The Group will coordinate with the Department of Health, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Health Service Executive and Tusla, the Child and Family Agency.

168 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 18 December 2017.

169 Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, Eoghan Murphy TD, Written Answers, Homelessness Strategy [52529/17].

170 Olivia Kelly, 'Family hub centres to open at 19 sites in Dublin', *The Irish Times*, 25 July 2017.

171 *Rebuilding Ireland, Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness: Third Quarterly Progress Report (DHPLG 2017)* 60.

172 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 4 December 2017.

173 Evelyn Ring, 'Eoghan Murphy: Family homelessness stabilised', *The Irish Examiner*, 7 December 2017.

174 Kitty Holland, 'Ireland's 3,194 homeless children prepare for Christmas' *The Irish Times*, 16 December 2017.

175 Rory Hearne and Mary Murphy, *Investing in the Right to a Home: Housing, HAPs and Hubs* (Maynooth University 2017) 2.

176 Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, *The provision of emergency accommodation to families experiencing homelessness* (IHREC 2017) 9.

177 Kathy Walsh and Brian Harvey, *Family Experiences of Pathways into Homelessness* (Housing Agency 2015) 29.

178 Prof Geoffrey Shannon Ninth Report of the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection: A Report Submitted to the Oireachtas (Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2016) 71.

179 Michelle Share and Marita Hennessy, *Food Access and Nutritional Health among Families in Emergency Homeless Accommodation*. Abridged report (Focus Ireland 2017) 13.

180 *ibid.*

181 *ibid* 13.

182 *ibid* 8–9, 13.

clearly needed as no one government department holds responsibility for addressing food poverty in homelessness situations. Responsibility for, and a dedicated budget line, should be allocated to a key government department. In the view of the Alliance, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs could be the appropriate vehicle under the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014–2020* implementation structures.¹⁸³

The continuing increase, since at least 2014, in the number of families and children experiencing homelessness, including the alarming rate at which the situation is deteriorating outside Dublin, reflects the failure of the policy approach adopted over several decades in relation to meeting social housing needs. That policy has been characterised by a failure to ensure an adequate supply of social housing provided by local authorities and voluntary housing bodies, and an ever-increasing reliance on rent supplementation in the private rental sector to meet social housing need. As general demand for properties in the private rental sector has increased, families on low incomes and those reliant on rent supplementation to meet rental costs have been squeezed out of the sector into homelessness. Despite the commencement of legislation in January 2017¹⁸⁴ to provide some additional protections for tenants, high rents and a fundamental lack of security of tenure in the sector have continued to leave families vulnerable to eviction or unable to obtain a tenancy. The very limited number of tenancies falling within the stated rent limits for the purposes of Rent Supplement and Housing Assistance Payment (HAP),¹⁸⁵ clearly illustrate the difficulties faced by lower-income households.

Budget 2018 allocated €1.9 billion to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government to meet current and capital expenditure on housing. This

represented an increase of €600 million, or 46 per cent, on the allocation for 2017, and provided for the delivery of 3,800 newly built social housing units in 2018, increased homeless supports and the roll-out of family hubs.¹⁸⁶ While this increased allocation is welcome, far higher levels of investment in social housing provision, and in affordable housing, are required to meet existing and growing need. Notably €680 million from the housing budget for 2018 – more than a third of the total housing budget – is ear-marked to supplement rents in the private rented sector. The scale of the challenge of social housing provision is highlighted when account is taken of the number of households assessed as being in need of social housing: these totalled 91,600 in 2016,¹⁸⁷ with 84,000 children living in these households. There is a need to commit to a target of at least 10,000 new social housing units each year. Overall housing policy must also address the factors fuelling the escalating price of housing, begin the development of a publicly provided cost rental sector, and effectively address the issue of vacant housing through taxation measures and the use of compulsory purchase orders.

National Quality Standards Framework: The proposed National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) for Homeless Services, developed by the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) in consultation with stakeholders,¹⁸⁸ is welcome. The Standards could play an important role in bringing about improved quality and consistency in emergency accommodation as well as ensuring that providers are held to account for substandard conditions. Since 2014, a National Advisory Group has overseen a consultation process with regional focus groups and preparatory work with service providers in advance of phased implementation of the Framework.¹⁸⁹

In 2017, the NQSF for Homeless Services was aligned with the National Standards for Safer Better Healthcare

183 Department of Children and Youth Affairs, *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014–2020* (DCYA 2014). The key groupings involved in the implementation infrastructure of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* are the *Children and Young People's Policy Consortium*, the Sponsors Group, the Advisory Council and the Children and Young People's Services Committees National Steering Group together with the children and young people's participatory structures Comhairle na nOg and the Structured Dialogue Working Group. For an overview of the structures see the Department of Children and Youth Affairs website: <<http://bit.ly/2kHgBsH>> accessed 18 December 2017.

184 The Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016.

185 Simon Communities in Ireland, *Locked Out of the Market VIII: The Gap between Rent Supplement/HAP and Market Rents* (Simon Communities in Ireland 2017).

186 Minister of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Eoghan Murphy TD 'Minister Eoghan Murphy's address to the Dáil on Budget 2018'; <<http://bit.ly/2jpaFF9>> accessed 6 December 2017.

187 Housing Agency, *National Statement of Housing Supply and Demand 2016 and Outlook for 2017–18*, (Housing Agency, 2017) 4.

188 Information provided by the Dublin Region Homeless Executive at a meeting with the Reception and Integration Agency, 13 October 2017.

189 *ibid.*

developed by the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA).¹⁹⁰ The inclusion of child-specific standards for homeless services is welcome as these could help ensure that children are considered in the running of services which have been designed primarily to accommodate adults. The NQSF provides that children will receive age-appropriate information on their rights and that their needs will inform wider planning decisions for their family.¹⁹¹ The Standards provide for children's rights to be facilitated and where they are not, a child-friendly complaints mechanism is available. Service providers will also have to undertake a risk assessment for children in their service.¹⁹² The NQSF sets out the minimum standards and legal requirements for dealing with child protection and child safety issues as well as the supports to be provided.¹⁹³

The enforcement process for these standards is based on a Quality Assessment and Improvement Workbook which provides a self-assessment tool for homelessness services.¹⁹⁴ It is based on a continuous quality improvement process with four levels: emerging improvement; continuous improvement; sustained improvement; excellence. However, this self-assessment approach is inevitably subjective and dependent on services self-reporting non-compliance with standards. There will be a two-year lead-in for services to reach the minimum standard of quality required.¹⁹⁵ While it is welcome that the DRHE is encouraging continuous and consistent progress, in order to adequately assess the services' progress against the Standards, an independent inspectorate must be established to carry out unannounced inspections, a recommendation made by service users during the consultation process.¹⁹⁶ Clear sanctions must be put in place where services do not meet the required standards.

Rapid-delivery housing units: A temporary 'rapid build' scheme was initiated in 2016 with the aim of moving homeless families out of emergency accommodation. Progress in implementing the scheme has been extremely slow but the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government has indicated that it has been superseded by the roll-out of the family hub programme to provide 'emergency accommodation more suited to the needs of families'.¹⁹⁷ Only 22 of 350 units approved in 2016 were delivered and occupied that year.¹⁹⁸ The planned completion of 353 units in 2017 and early 2018,¹⁹⁹ falls significantly short of the 650 expected to come online in 2017 and 500 planned for 2018.

The continuing increase, since at least 2014, in the number of families and children experiencing homelessness, including the alarming rate at which the situation is deteriorating outside Dublin, reflects the failure of the policy approach adopted over several decades in relation to meeting social housing needs. That policy has been characterised by a failure to ensure an adequate supply of social housing provided by local authorities and voluntary housing bodies, and an ever-increasing reliance on rent supplementation in the private rental sector to meet social housing need.

190 *ibid.*

191 Dublin Region Homeless Executive, *National Quality Standards Framework for Homeless Services in Ireland*. Outline proposal for the development of a National Quality Standards Framework and good practice guidelines for homeless services in Ireland (DRHE 2017).

192 *ibid.*

193 *ibid.*

194 *ibid.*

195 Information provided by the Dublin Region Homeless Executive at a meeting with the Reception and Integration Agency, 13 October 2017.

196 *ibid.*

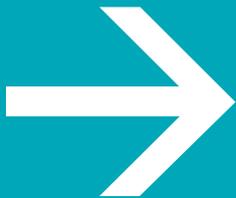
197 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 4 December 2017.

198 Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 'Overview of Activities and Structure' <<http://bit.ly/2j3eD5x>> accessed 20 September 2017.

199 Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, Eoghan Murphy TD, Dáil Debates, Written Answers, Social and Affordable Housing Provision, 29 June 2017 [30555/17].

Child and Family Homelessness

Immediate Actions for 2018



DECLARE A HOUSING EMERGENCY AND COMMIT TO TAKING ALL FEASIBLE MEASURES TO ADDRESS THE SHORTAGE OF HOUSING, AND THE LACK OF AFFORDABILITY AND SECURITY BEING EXPERIENCED BY SO MANY HOUSEHOLDS IN IRELAND.

Ensure that families are provided with the necessary financial and material supports to enable them to remain in their homes, increase security of tenure and ensure that children are not forced to live in unsafe and unsuitable conditions.

COMMIT TO THE PRINCIPLE THAT LONG-TERM SOCIAL HOUSING NEED WILL BE MET THROUGH SOCIAL HOUSING PROVIDED BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES, VOLUNTARY HOUSING BODIES OR SOME OTHER NEW NOT-FOR-PROFIT ENTITIES.

While supplementation of rents in the private rental sector can play an important role in meeting social housing need in the short-term, the policy of increasingly relying on such supplementation to respond to long-term social housing need has proven to be an expensive failure, and is a key factor in the creation of the current homelessness crisis.

DELIVER ON THE COMMITMENT TO END THE LONG-TERM USE OF UNSUITABLE EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AND IMPLEMENT HOUSING FIRST COMMITMENTS AS A MATTER OF URGENCY.

Prioritise families with children and move them from unsuitable emergency accommodation, including hotels, into long-term sustainable housing. Children should be able to access play and recreational facilities while in homeless accommodation. In order to avoid the risk of institutionalisation and the 'normalisation' of homelessness, families should not be left longer than six months in family hubs before being re-housed.

PUBLISH AND IMPLEMENT THE NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARDS FRAMEWORK FOR HOMELESS SERVICES AND ESTABLISH A ROBUST COMPLIANCE FRAMEWORK WITH AN INDEPENDENT INSPECTORATE.

In order to ensure that the National Quality Standards Framework is adhered to and applied consistently across all forms of homeless accommodation, including family hubs, publication and implementation of the Framework must be accompanied by the establishment of an independent inspectorate.

COMPLETE THE RAPID-BUILD PROGRAMME AS A MATTER OF URGENCY.

Complete the programme as a way to deliver more social housing units.

2.2

Parental Leave and Income Supports

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT

A Programme for a Partnership Government commits to:

- > Increase paid parental leave in the first year after birth and support stay-at-home parents through an increase in the Home Carer Tax Credit.



Progress: Some

- > Introduce a new Working Family Payment to promote work over welfare and supplement the income of households to ensure that every parent working at least 15 hours per week will have more take-home pay for each hour they work. Support middle-income lone parents in work by increasing income disregards through this scheme.



Progress: Some

'Parental Leave and Income Supports' receives a 'C' grade in *Report Card 2018*. This grade reflects the efforts made to raise awareness of Paternity Benefit and proposals to introduce a Family Leave Bill. The €2 increase in Budget 2018 for the children of social welfare recipients is welcome but no specific provision was made to recognise the additional costs that arise for parents where a child is over the age of 12. The Budget 2018 provision for an increase in income disregards for working lone parents is positive but these disregards have not been fully restored to 2011 levels.

Every child has the right to a standard of living that is adequate to their development – physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social.²⁰⁰ Parents and guardians have the primary responsibility to provide for the child's

material needs, but the State is also responsible for alleviating poverty and assisting parents and guardians where necessary.²⁰¹ In 2016, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed its deep concern at the 'significant increase in the number of children living in consistent poverty' in Ireland and, in particular, referred to the incidence of such poverty among single-parent households.²⁰²

Article 18 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises that support for parents in the early years of a child's life is particularly important. In interpreting this provision, the UN Committee acknowledges that 'many parents are economically active, often in poorly paid occupations which they combine with their parental responsibilities'; thus the Committee requires States 'to take all appropriate

200 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (20 November 1989) 1577 UNTS 3 (UNCRC) Art 27.

201 *ibid.*

202 UNCRC 'Concluding Observations: Ireland' (2016) UN Doc CRC/C/IRL/CO/3-4 para 59.



APPLIED FOR PATERNITY BENEFIT

measures to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from childcare services, maternity protection and facilities for which they are eligible.²⁰³ The UN Committee also promotes 'an integrated approach' which focuses on health and education supports for new parents and includes 'interventions that impact indirectly on parents' ability to promote the best interests of children (e.g. taxation and benefits, adequate housing, working hours).'²⁰⁴

Paid Parental Leave: The introduction of two weeks' paid paternity leave in 2016 was an important step forward in the provision of paid family leave in Ireland

in the first year after birth, in line with the commitment in *A Programme for a Partnership Government*. Paid paternity leave may be taken in the first six months after the birth of a baby (or an adoption placement) by fathers or same-sex partners. In 2017, the allocation for paternity leave was €16 million.²⁰⁵ Between its introduction in September 2016 and the end of October 2017, almost 29,000 Paternity Benefit claims were awarded.²⁰⁶ It is expected that there will be almost 30,000 Paternity Benefit applications for 2017, the first full year of the scheme.²⁰⁷ A final figure on uptake is not expected until 18 months after the scheme commenced²⁰⁸ but the 2017 uptake equates to approximately 70 per cent of Maternity Benefit applications in 2016.²⁰⁹ The national advertising campaign to raise awareness of the Paternity Benefit scheme is welcome.²¹⁰

Data on the duration of family leave in 26 European countries show that Ireland has the fourth shortest period of such leave. On average, the other 25 countries provided 19 months' paid leave after the birth of a child.²¹¹ To introduce six months parental leave in Ireland would cost approximately €273 million or €42 million for each additional month.²¹² The cost to the State of providing Parental Benefit must be weighed against the benefit to children who do best when cared for at home during at least the first year of their lives.²¹³ Furthermore, employee retention and productivity is higher where organisations have parental leave policies and provide flexible working arrangements.²¹⁴

The European Union made proposals in April 2017 to introduce a Directive on Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers.²¹⁵ The proposals would introduce at least four months of non-transferable paid parental leave for each parent, which could be taken up until the

203 UNCRC 'General Comment No. 7 on Implementing Rights in Early Childhood' (2006) UN Doc CRC/C/GC/7/Rev.1 para 21.

204 *ibid* para 20(a).

205 Department of Social Protection, 'Ministerial Brief June 2017 – Part A' <<http://bit.ly/2AQRDXI>> accessed 20 September 2017.

206 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, 23 November 2017.

207 Department of Social Protection, 'Ministerial Brief June 2017 – Part A' <<http://bit.ly/2AQRDXI>> accessed 20 September 2017.

208 *ibid*.

209 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, 23 November 2017.

210 Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, 'Minister Doherty urges new fathers to claim Paternity Benefit' <<https://www.welfare.ie/en/pressoffice/Pages/pr090817.aspx>> accessed 20 September 2017.

211 Start Strong, 'Family Leave in Ireland, How Do We Compare?' (Start Strong 2015).

212 Inter-Departmental Group on Future Investment in Early Years and School-Age Childcare and Education, 'Report of Inter-Departmental Working Group: Future Investment in Childcare in Ireland' (DCYA 2015) 86 <<http://bit.ly/1GDVkBn>> accessed 6 February 2017; Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Right from the Start: Report on the Expert Advisory Group on the Early Years Strategy (DCYA 2013) 11.

213 National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, *NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development: Findings for children aged up to age 4 ½ years* (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2006).

214 Brigid Schulte et al, 'Paid Family Leave: How Much Time is Enough?' <<http://bit.ly/2roQ1Xz>> accessed 19 October 2017.

215 European Commission, 'Delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights – Commission adopts first concrete initiatives' (26 April 2017) <<http://bit.ly/2oL89JQ>> accessed 15 December 2017.

child reached 12 years of age.²¹⁶ The minimum rate of payment would equate to the rate of sick pay.²¹⁷ Parents would also be entitled to more flexible working arrangements on their return from parental leave. It is a matter of concern that in December 2017 the Irish Government sought to delay the introduction of the Directive due to 'the significant costs involved'.²¹⁸

Despite its reservations regarding the proposed EU Directive, the Government intends to progress a Family Leave Bill to consolidate existing leave entitlements including maternity, parental, carer's and adoptive leave.²¹⁹ The Department of Justice and Equality holds responsibility for policy on family leave but the budget in this area is allocated to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. Initial discussions have taken place between the two departments on how to deliver on the Government's commitment to prioritise paid parental leave in the first year of a child's life.²²⁰ Consultation with other key government departments is planned, and the Senior Officials Group and Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Service Reform will provide political guidance.²²¹ The *National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017–2020* promises to 'publish proposals for the implementation of the commitment' by the end of 2017 and to legislate for these proposals 'as soon as possible thereafter'.²²²

Additional Support for Low-Income Families: *A Programme for a Partnership Government* committed to introducing a Working Family Payment²²³ with the aim of reducing child poverty and making work pay.²²⁴ An internal departmental working group²²⁵ and an Interdepartmental Working Group were established in 2016.²²⁶ An open consultation took place in the first quarter of 2017 which informed the proposals

of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to the Minister on how best to fulfil the Programme for Government commitment. From its analysis, the Department concluded that 'the existing in-work supports are effective, and work well in assisting individuals into employment'.²²⁷



ONE PARENT FAMILIES

In Budget 2018, it was announced that the Family Income Supplement (FIS), a weekly tax-free payment for low-paid employees with children, would be renamed the Working Family Payment.²²⁸ Furthermore, the weekly earnings threshold limits would be increased by €10 for families with up to three children.²²⁹ In October 2017, just over 57,000 families were in receipt of FIS in respect of 127,324 children at an average weekly rate of €134.²³⁰ The Back to Work Family Dividend, first introduced in 2015 and due to end in March 2018, is now to be retained to the end of 2018

216 European Commission, 'Factsheet: A new start to support work-life balance for parents and carers' <<http://bit.ly/2AR3ro2>> accessed 15 December 2017.

217 *ibid.*

218 Valerie Flynn, 'State seeking to stifle right to paid parental leave', *The Sunday Times*, 10 December 2017.

219 Department of Justice and Equality, 'Briefing document for Minister – June 2017', <<http://bit.ly/2BQ3DzT>> accessed 20 September 2017.

220 *ibid.*

221 *ibid.*

222 Department of Justice and Equality, *National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017–2020: Creating a better society for all* (DJE 2017) 32.

223 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the Department of Social Protection, 23 January 2017.

224 *ibid.*

225 Department of Social Protection, 'Ministerial Brief June 2017 – Part A' <<http://bit.ly/2AQrDXI>> accessed 20 September 2017.

226 *ibid.* The Group comprises representatives from the Departments of Business, Enterprise and Innovation; Children and Youth Affairs; Education and Skills; Employment Affairs and Social Protection; Finance; Housing, Planning, and Local Government; Public Expenditure and Reform, and Revenue.

227 Department of Social Protection, 'Ministerial Brief June 2017 – Part A' <<http://bit.ly/2AQrDXI>> accessed 20 September 2017.

228 *ibid.*

229 Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, 'Minister Doherty announces Social Welfare Budget for 2018' <<http://www.welfare.ie/en/pressoffice/Pages/pr101017.aspx>> accessed 12 October 2017.

230 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, 23 November 2017.

to support parents returning to work.²³¹ In November 2017, almost 8,100 people were in receipt of the payment with 16,467 child beneficiaries.²³² The number of people receiving the Dividend fell in July and August 2017 as 5,000 recipients who were subject to the changes introduced in 2015 to the One Parent Family Payment came to the end of their maximum two-year entitlement to the scheme.²³³

The other key Budget 2018 announcement for families in receipt of a social welfare payment was an addition of €2 to the Qualified Child Increase (QCI).²³⁴ While an increase in QCI is welcome, the change provided for in Budget 2018 does not reflect the recommendation by the National Advisory Council for Children and Young People that there should be a higher QCI rate for children over 12.²³⁵ Households with older children suffer greater income inadequacy and it is estimated that, in 2018, these households will represent 77 per cent of those facing the most severe hardship.²³⁶

A Programme for a Partnership Government also committed to tackling low pay by increasing the minimum wage to '€10.50 per hour over the next five years'; strengthening the role of the Low Pay Commission to examine the gender pay gap and in-work poverty; and strengthening regulations on precarious work.²³⁷ Budget 2018 increased the hourly minimum wage by 30 cent to €9.55, the second increase in the term of the current Government. However, the rate continues to fall below the Government's own target and represents only 82 per cent of the living wage which is necessary to maintain a

minimum essential standard of living.²³⁸ The publication of the Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2017 in December 2017 is welcome in so far as it addresses some of the issues arising from precarious employment.

The Home Carer Tax Credit reduces the tax liability of married couples or civil partners by a specific amount where one partner works in the home caring for a child or other dependent person and the couple are jointly assessed for tax purposes.²³⁹ In Budget 2018, this tax credit was increased for the third time in three years, rising from €1,100 to €1,200 where the carer has an annual income of less than €7,200.²⁴⁰ The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure, Paschal Donohue TD, has indicated that it is not possible for Revenue to separate out the data that would show how many people will benefit from the change.²⁴¹

Income Disregards for Lone Parents: In 2016, there were 218,817 one-parent families in Ireland of which almost 190,000 were headed by women.²⁴² More than 350,000 children live in a household headed by a lone parent.²⁴³ In 2017, 58.5 per cent of lone parents were at work, as compared to 76 per cent of two-parent families.²⁴⁴ More than a third of lone parent households are at risk of poverty; more than a quarter live in 'consistent poverty'; and almost 60 per cent experience two or more types of deprivation.²⁴⁵ The rate of 'consistent poverty' among children in lone parent households is more than twice the overall 'consistent child poverty' rate of 11.6 per cent.²⁴⁶

231 Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, 'Minister Doherty announces Social Welfare Budget for 2018' <<http://www.welfare.ie/en/pressoffice/Pages/pr101017.aspx>> accessed 12 October 2017.

232 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, 23 November 2017.

233 *ibid.*

234 Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, 'Minister Doherty announces Social Welfare Budget for 2018' <<http://www.welfare.ie/en/pressoffice/Pages/pr101017.aspx>> accessed 12 October 2017.

235 National Advisory Council for Children and Young People, 'NGO Submission on Actions to Achieve the Child Poverty Reduction Target' (National Advisory Council for Children and Young People 2017) 18. The submission was developed by the NGO members of the Council's sub-group on child poverty, co-convened by the Department of Social Protection and the Children's Rights Alliance. The Council adopted the paper in November 2016.

236 Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice, 'Budget 2018: MESL Impact Briefing' <<http://bit.ly/2nEpMiy>> accessed 12 October 2017.

237 Government of Ireland, *A Programme for a Partnership Government 2016* (2016) 40.

238 Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice, 'Budget 2018: MESL Impact Briefing' <<http://bit.ly/2nEpMiy>> accessed 12 October 2017.

239 Revenue, 'Home Carer Tax Credit' <<http://bit.ly/2nEtngq>> accessed 31 January 2017.

240 Citizens Information Board, 'Budget 2018' <<http://bit.ly/2BQEvTE>> accessed 12 October 2017.

241 Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure, Paschal Donohue TD, Written Answers, Tax Credits, 20 June 2017 [27276/17].

242 Central Statistics Office, *Census of Population 2016 – Profile 4 Households and Families* (CSO 2017).

243 *ibid.*

244 Central Statistics Office, 'Quarterly National Household Survey - QNHS Households and Family Units Quarter 2 2011 - Quarter 2 2017' <<http://bit.ly/2ACZpyr>> accessed 6 December 2017.

245 Central Statistics Office, 'Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2015 Results' (CSO 2017) <<http://bit.ly/2jV6MG9>> accessed 2 February 2017.

246 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the Central Statistics Office, 2 February 2017.

Income disregards support lone parents in work as a certain portion of earned income will not be considered in means-testing for a social welfare payment. Lone parents require additional supports to ensure that they can engage in paid work and there are concerns that, with a focus on employment activation measures, transitioning to other payments such as Jobseeker's Allowance (JA) acts as a disincentive to taking up part-time work as a result of the reduction in income disregards.²⁴⁷ Budget 2018 increased the income disregard for parents in receipt of One Parent Family Payment (OPFP) and Jobseeker's Transition Payment (JST) by €20 per week meaning that, from January 2018, lone parents can earn up to €130 weekly and still qualify for their full social welfare payment.²⁴⁸ Prior to 2012, a lone parent was permitted to earn €146.50 per week and retain their full payment but the earnings limit was then reduced to €90.²⁴⁹ In October 2017, just over 15,500 OPFP recipients were in employment (40 per cent of the total receiving the payment); of 14,451 people receiving the JST payment, almost 5,000 were in work.²⁵⁰ Another important income support for working lone parents is FIS: almost half of those in receipt of the payment are households headed by a lone parent.²⁵¹

The Social Welfare Act 2016 provided that the Minister for Social Protection would commission a report 'on the financial and social effects of the amendments to One Parent Family Payment since 1 January 2012, taking into account the effects on welfare dependency and the poverty rates of those in receipt of One-parent Family Payment'.²⁵² International economic consultants Indecon prepared the report which was published in

October 2017; it included the findings of a survey of 3,684 lone parents directly impacted by the policy changes.²⁵³ The report noted that changes to the OPFP had resulted in a net benefit of €45 million to the Exchequer since their introduction in 2012.²⁵⁴ The analysis found that welfare dependency appeared to decrease but highlighted that 'a potential concern is that many of those who lost OPFP remain unemployed or in low paid or part-time employment'.²⁵⁵ Almost half of the participants reported a loss of income and more than half said their situation had worsened since they lost access to the payment.²⁵⁶ Lone parents continued to report high levels of poverty and deprivation.²⁵⁷

Income supports alone cannot alleviate or eradicate the high poverty rates being experienced by one parent families so it is important that the Government continues to invest in targeted supports and services for these families. Notably, the Indecon report failed to take account of the cost of childcare,²⁵⁸ particularly for lone parents,²⁵⁹ or to consider how this may have impacted on their experience of the policy changes or take-up of increased working hours. The important role of education was acknowledged in the report but the reality is that lone parents continue to face difficulties in accessing education supports.²⁶⁰ A further review is to take place of the OPFP scheme and it is anticipated that it will include data to the end of 2018.²⁶¹

247 M. Millar and R. Crosse, *Lone Parents and Activation, What Works and Why: A Review of the International Evidence in the Irish Context* (The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, National University of Ireland, Galway 2016) 32.

248 Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, 'Minister Doherty announces Social Welfare Budget for 2018' <<http://www.welfare.ie/en/pressoffice/Pages/pr101017.aspx>> accessed 12 October 2017.

249 One Family, 'One-Parent Family Payment & Income Disregards' (2014) <<http://bit.ly/1guyvYj>> accessed 31 January 2017.

250 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, 23 November 2017.

251 *ibid.*

252 Section 12 of the Social Welfare Act 2016.

253 Indecon International Economic Consultants, *Independent Review of the Amendments to the One-parent Family Payment since January 2012* (DEASP 2017) iii.

254 *ibid* xiii.

255 *ibid* 33.

256 *ibid* x.

257 *ibid* ix.

258 One Family, 'Response to the Report "Indecon Independent Review of the Amendments to the One-parent Family Payment since January 2012"' <<http://bit.ly/2zaQnFm>> accessed 19 October 2017.

259 European Commission, 'Country Report Ireland, Including an In-Depth Review on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances' <<http://bit.ly/2Bee1VJ>> accessed 19 October 2017.

260 One Family, 'End Child Poverty, Make Work Pay: One Family's Key Recommendations for Budget 2018' <<http://bit.ly/2y4mXdH>> accessed 6 December 2017.

261 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, 23 November 2017.

Parental Leave and Income Supports

Immediate Actions for 2018



INCREASE PAID LEAVE FOR PARENTS IN THE FIRST YEAR OF A CHILD'S LIFE.

Publish and enact a Family Leave Bill in 2018 to provide for paid parental leave which could be taken after maternity leave by either parent. The legislation should reflect the minimum provisions of the proposed EU Directive on Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers. Monitor the uptake of Paternity Benefit to ensure that as many new parents as possible are availing of the entitlement.

MONITOR THE UPTAKE OF THE WORKING FAMILY PAYMENT AND CONSIDER WAYS IN WHICH IT COULD BE IMPROVED TO SUPPORT FAMILIES IN NEED; PROVIDE FOR A HIGHER QUALIFIED CHILD INCREASE FOR CHILDREN AGED 12 AND OVER.

Ensure the Working Family Payment is an effective targeted payment to alleviate child poverty. Raise the rate of payment for the Qualified Child Increase for children over the age of 12, in line with the recommendation of the National Advisory Council on Children and Young People.

RESTORE THE INCOME DISREGARD FOR THE ONE PARENT FAMILY PAYMENT AND JOBSEEKER'S PAYMENTS FOR LONE PARENTS.

Increase the income disregard to its pre-recession level of €146.50 per week for the One Parent Family Payment, the Jobseeker's Transition Payment and for lone parents in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance.

2.3

Prevention and Early Intervention

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT

A Programme for a Partnership Government commits to:

- > Tackle child poverty by increasing community-based early intervention programmes, such as the ABC Programme.



Progress: Some

- > Ensure the sharing and implementation of learning from such programmes.



Progress: Some

- > Establish a dedicated Prevention and Early Intervention Unit in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform/Finance in the first 100 days.



Progress: Good

'Prevention and Early Intervention' receives a 'C' grade in *Report Card 2018*. The public funding for the Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme has been extended to 2018 pending completion of a programme evaluation. The learning from ABC is starting to feed into key policies and initiatives. There has been uncertainty about the future of ABC sites. However, the development of the National Data and Information Hub project by Tusla, in partnership with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, is promising for the local implementation of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*. The considered consultative approach adopted by the Prevention

and Early Intervention Unit in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, in developing its remit and strategy, bodes well for future success.

Every child has the right to survival and development.²⁶² The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recognises that prevention and intervention strategies during early childhood have the potential to impact positively on young children's current well-being and future prospects.²⁶³ Prevention is defined as ensuring that a problem does not arise in the first place; early intervention means acting at the first signs of trouble, while treatment means responding once what could

262 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, A/RES/44/25 (20 November 1989) Art 6.

263 UNCRC 'General Comment No.7: Implementing child rights in early childhood' (2006) UN Doc CRC/C/G/GC/7/Rev.1 para 8.

go wrong, has gone wrong.²⁶⁴ Prevention and early intervention mean intervening at a young age, or early in the onset of difficulties, or at points of increased vulnerability such as school transitions, adolescence and parenthood.²⁶⁵ The Council of Europe's²⁶⁶ recommendation addressing children's rights in social services planning, delivery and evaluation includes the principles of prevention and early intervention, child-focused partnership with parents, and assessment of the child's needs, to encompass protective factors and strength, as well as risk factors in the child's environment.²⁶⁷

The UN Committee requires that States take all possible measures to improve perinatal care for mothers and babies, reduce infant and child mortality, and create conditions that promote the well-being of all young children.²⁶⁸ Young children are especially vulnerable to the harm caused by unreliable, inconsistent relationships with parents and caregivers, growing up in extreme poverty and deprivation, or being surrounded by conflict and violence.²⁶⁹ States are required to render appropriate assistance to parents, guardians and extended families in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities.²⁷⁰ An integrated approach would include interventions that impact indirectly on parents' ability to promote the best interests of children for example, taxation and benefits, adequate housing, flexible working hours as well as those that have more immediate consequences (for instance, perinatal health services, parent education, home visitors).²⁷¹ The UN Committee obliges States to create a safe and supportive environment for adolescents, including within their family, in schools, in all types of institutions in which they may live, within their workplace and/or in the society at large.²⁷²

International evidence suggests that prevention and early intervention approaches achieve much better results for children than later intervention, and can reduce the need for costly, less effective interventions later in life.²⁷³ However, Ireland's balance of public spending is skewed towards crisis rather than preventative spending.²⁷⁴

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264 Michael Little and Sonia Sodha, *Prevention and Early Intervention in Children's Services* (NESTA 2012) 3.

265 Department of Children and Youth Affairs, *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014–2020* (DCYA 2014) 29.

266 The Council of Europe is a human rights institution. It includes 47 member states, 28 of which are in the EU. It promotes human rights through international conventions, monitoring member states' implementation progress and making recommendations through independent expert monitoring bodies. It oversees the implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter. The European Court of Human Rights is a key institution.

267 Council of Europe, Council of Europe Recommendation on children's rights and social services friendly to children and families (Council of Europe 2011) 9.

268 UNCRC 'General Comment No.7: Implementing child rights in early childhood' (2006) UN Doc CRC/C/GC/7/Rev.1 para 10.

269 *ibid* para 36.

270 *ibid* para 20.

271 *ibid* para 20a.

272 UNCRC 'General Comment No.4: Adolescent health and development in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child' (2003) UN Doc CRC/GC/2003/4 para 39a.

273 Prevention and Early Intervention Network, *The Case for Prevention and Early Intervention* (PEIN 2014) 3.

274 Ellis Lawlor and Sinéad McGilloway, *An Economic Appraisal of the youngballymun Initiative* (Just Economics 2012) 36.

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014–2020 identifies prevention and early intervention as one of six 'transformational goals'.²⁷⁵ It aims for policy responses and services to improve their effectiveness and responsiveness and strengthen the system of supports around the individual child or young person to achieve better outcomes.²⁷⁶ Strategically, it considers universal services as the main providers of prevention and early intervention, naming early childhood education and care services, schools, youth, community and health services.²⁷⁷ In this context, the 2017 report of the all-party Committee on the Future of Healthcare, *Sláintecare* recognised the importance in adequately resourcing child health and wellbeing services including parenting supports and recommended the recruitment of '900 more general nurses to work in the community... to free up Public Health Nurses, who have training in child health services.'²⁷⁸

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures also commits to lifting approximately 100,000 children out of consistent poverty by 2020.²⁷⁹ There are currently 130,000 children living in consistent poverty; such children are more likely to be older (between 12 and 17 years), in a lone parent household, tend to live in households where there is no person at work, more likely to be in the Border, Midlands or Western regions and slightly more likely to live in a rural rather than an urban location.²⁸⁰

Community-based Early Intervention Programmes:

From 2004, the Government and the Atlantic Philanthropies co-funded evidence-informed programmes aiming to improve outcomes for children in urban areas of disadvantage, by intervening in

their lives from the pre-natal stage to 18 years.²⁸¹ The Programmes themselves set out to relieve the impact of poverty on children and young people's lives. The current Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme, operating since 2013, offers interventions in 13 urban sites around the country, addressing child health and development, children's learning, parenting, and integrated service delivery.²⁸² The ABC Programme aims to test and evaluate innovative prevention and early intervention approaches to improve outcomes for children and families at risk of poverty.²⁸³ The Programme was due to end in 2016, with the intention that learning from the initiative, identified through an evaluation, could then be mainstreamed in established services and supports for children and families in Ireland.²⁸⁴ Funding has been extended to the end of August 2018 by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs following the departure of Atlantic Philanthropies, to allow the Programme to continue to meet all programme commitments for the 2017/18 academic year and to align with the completion of the national evaluation.²⁸⁵

The ABC Programme evaluation will determine the extent to which the initiative changed child and family outcomes.²⁸⁶ A cost analysis, rather than a cost-benefit analysis, is being developed with a focus on the costs of service delivery, the expenditure by services funded by the ABC programme, and the leveraging of other resources that ABC areas have been able to secure.²⁸⁷ The focus on a cost analysis was due to the limitations of the available data for consideration considered as part of the national evaluation.²⁸⁸ An interim evaluation report was finalised in June 2017 and a summary will

275 Department of Children and Youth Affairs, *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014–2020* (DCYA 2014) 23.

276 *ibid.*

277 *ibid.*

278 Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Future of Healthcare, *Sláintecare, Report of the Oireachtas Committee on the Future of Healthcare* (Houses of the Oireachtas 2017) 60-63.

279 Poverty is measured through the EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC). A child or young person under 18 years is defined as being in consistent poverty if they live in a household that is both at risk of poverty and experiencing enforced deprivation. Source: Department of Social Protection Monitor 2014 (Department of Social Protection 2016).

280 Department of Social Protection, *Who are the children living in consistent poverty?* (unpublished communication 2015), 1.

281 The Atlantic Philanthropies, *Investing in a Better Future for All* (The Atlantic Philanthropies) <www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/our-story> accessed 19 October 2017.

282 Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 'ABC Overview' <<http://bit.ly/2BcztHT>> accessed 13 October 2017.

283 *ibid.*

284 Kitty Holland, 'Three ABC anti-child poverty programmes in Dublin in doubt', *The Irish Times*, 11 February 2016.

285 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 1 December 2017.

286 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 6 December 2017.

287 *ibid.*

288 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 1 December 2017.

be available in early 2018.²⁸⁹ The interim report indicates some initial positive trends in areas such as parenting, children's learning, and emotional development, although data collection is ongoing and observations made in the interim report are subject to change.²⁹⁰ The Department of Children and Youth Affairs anticipates that the final national evaluation report will be completed by June 2018.²⁹¹

The Department hosted an Open Policy Debate in February 2017 to explore potential steps towards mainstreaming elements of the ABC Programme, and discuss future community-based prevention and early intervention initiatives.²⁹² The Department intends to mainstream the ABC Programme objectives through local partnerships and developments at national level such as the proposed pilot project on a school-based model of speech and language therapy.²⁹³ The Department's own ABC Programme Inter-departmental Group and the development of the Quality and Capacity Building Initiative (QCBI) (discussed below) will also play a role in mainstreaming.²⁹⁴ The Department expects that any future prevention and early intervention initiatives will utilise the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* framework and the QCBI implementation and governance structures.²⁹⁵

The mainstreaming of the ABC learning provides the Government with a key opportunity to reduce some of the effects of poverty for children living in consistent poverty. However, future programme developments need to consider the fact that children living in consistent poverty are more likely to live in rural locations and on the Border, Midlands and Western regions.²⁹⁶ The ABC Programme sites to date have all been located in urban centres and have needed significant investment. It will be a challenge for Government to replicate this model throughout the

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country. In developing the Programme, it will be critical to identify what learning can be translated to national initiatives and universal services. It will also be important to remember that an over-reliance on one type of model could result in certain groups of children being overlooked.

Sharing and Implementing Learning: The Department of Children and Youth Affairs is developing the QCBI, funded with €14 million from the Dormant Accounts Funding Scheme,²⁹⁷ as a co-ordinated approach to enhance capacity, knowledge and quality in prevention and early intervention for children, young people and their families.²⁹⁸ It aims to ensure that each key group working with children, young people and families knows what works and is able to apply an evidence-informed approach to the work.²⁹⁹ This approach is important because it helps programmes and initiatives to develop actions that meet the needs of service users.

QCBI involves four components aiming to: align data; harness evidence; enhance implementation through

289 *ibid.*

290 *ibid.*

291 *ibid.*

292 Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Area Based Childhood Programme Open Policy Debate Report (DCYA 2017) 2 <<https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/20170529ABCOpenPolicyDebateFeb2017.pdf>> accessed 7 October 2017.

293 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 1 December 2017.

294 *ibid.*

295 Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Area Based Childhood Programme Open Policy Debate Report (DCYA 2017) 2 <<https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/20170529ABCOpenPolicyDebateFeb2017.pdf>> accessed 7 October 2017.

296 Department of Social Protection, Who are the children living in consistent poverty? (unpublished communication 2015) 1.

297 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 1 December 2017.

298 Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Area Based Childhood Programme Open Policy Debate Report (DCYA 2017) 2 <<https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/20170529ABCOpenPolicyDebateFeb2017.pdf>> accessed 7 October 2017.

299 *ibid.*

coaching and development; and embed prevention and early intervention approaches through the development of a shared quality framework. The QCBI in partnership with Tusla established a National Data and Information Hub project in 2017.³⁰⁰ This project involves building an interactive area-based, mapping system to provide information for policy makers, service providers, Tusla, practitioners and communities so that the planning and delivery of services are informed by the best available data.³⁰¹ Partners within the Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs)³⁰² will also access and use the system to develop their respective priorities and plans.³⁰³ The project aims to provide a national standardised approach to mapping outcomes, indicators and services for children and young people³⁰⁴ beginning with a pilot project with 11 CYPSCs in the first year with a view to rolling it out across all CYPSC areas.³⁰⁵ A lack of data and collation of needs-based analyses, with a view to providing and integrating services with children at the centre, has been a consistent issue, so the establishment of this project is a welcome development.

The Department intends that QCBI will focus on enhancing capacity, access and use of data and evidence in service design and delivery, in line with the learning from the Prevention and Early Intervention Programme and ABC Programmes to date.³⁰⁶ Sharing the learning will extend beyond the ABC Programmes.³⁰⁷ The QCBI is anticipated to provide a framework for the delivery of better prevention and early intervention initiatives by building the capacity of CYPSCs and facilitating the sharing of information on evidence-based approaches and programmes and detailed data relating to children's services and outcomes. This is expected to assist in achieving cross-sectoral ownership and linking the programme into mainstream provision and structure.³⁰⁸

Prevention and Early Intervention Unit: The Prevention and Early Intervention Unit (PEIU), established in the Department of Expenditure and Public Reform in May 2017,³⁰⁹ will be responsible for evaluating prevention and early intervention models in respect of children and also older people with chronic conditions.³¹⁰ The PEIU has its full staff complement with an Assistant Principal and Administrative Officer reporting within the Expenditure Management Division.³¹¹ The PEIU has engaged with a broad range of stakeholders and contributed briefings to the National Economic Dialogue. This initial phase of the PEIU's work has focused on working towards a shared, cross-sectoral understanding of what is meant by a prevention and early intervention approach to policy in human services.³¹²

It is difficult to judge the impact of the Unit's work to date. An important indicator will be a report which will be issued for consideration by the Oireachtas in 2018 to propose appropriate ways to support the ongoing consideration of a prevention and early intervention approach to public policy making.³¹³

The QCBI is anticipated to provide a framework for the delivery of better prevention and early intervention initiatives by building the capacity of CYPSCs and facilitating the sharing of information on evidence-based approaches and programmes and detailed data relating to children's services and outcomes.

300 Tusla and Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 'Outcomes for Children National Data & Information Hub Project' <<http://bit.ly/2Cig7R>> accessed 15 December 2017.

301 *ibid.*

302 Children's Rights Alliance, *Report Card 2017* (Children's Rights Alliance, 2017) 24. CYPSCs are county-level committees which bring together the main statutory, community and voluntary providers of services to children and young people.

303 Tusla and Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 'Outcomes for Children National Data & Information Hub Project' <<http://bit.ly/2Cig7R>> accessed 15 December 2017.

304 *ibid.*

305 *ibid.*

306 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 1 December 2017.

307 *ibid.*

308 *ibid.*

309 Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, *Topical Issues 14: Prevention and early Intervention*, <www.per.gov.ie/wp.../Topical-Issues-14.-Prevention-and-Early-Intervention.pdf> accessed 7 October 2017.

310 Children's Rights Alliance, *Report Card 2017* (Children's Rights Alliance 2017) 23.

311 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 1 December 2017.

312 *ibid.*

313 *ibid.*

Prevention and Early Intervention

Immediate Actions for 2018



IMPLEMENT THE QUALITY CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVE.

The commissioning of the QCBI should commence in earnest in 2018, given that learning and mainstreaming is the strategy behind the Government's intended shift away from policy and delivery which are reactive rather than proactive.

THE PEIU SHOULD CONTINUE WITH THE CONSIDERED, CONSULTATIVE APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT. IT SHOULD ENSURE THAT ITS WORK IS INFORMED BY THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD PRINCIPLE.

The PEIU should engage with key personnel in each government department, and in its funded agencies, to deepen awareness and understanding of prevention and early intervention approaches; enhance the value placed on evidence and how it informs decisions, and improve understanding of the processes required to deliver effective services and supports.

IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE 2017 REPORT OF THE ALL-PARTY COMMITTEE ON THE FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE, SLÁINTECARE TO ADEQUATELY RESOURCE CHILD HEALTH AND WELLBEING SERVICES.

In particular implement the recommendation on the recruitment of 900 general nurses to work in the community to ensure that Public Health Nurses with specialised training in child health services can focus on children.