

Pre-Budget 2024 Submission

June 2023



Founded in 1995, the Children's Rights Alliance unites over 145 members working together to make Ireland one of the best places in the world to be a child. We change the lives of all children in Ireland by making sure that their rights are respected and protected in our laws, policies and services.

Accompaniment Support Service for Children (A.S.S.C.)
Alcohol Action Ireland
Amnesty International Ireland
An Cosán
Anew
Aoibhneas
Archways
AsIAM
Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland (AOTI)
Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI)
ATD Fourth World – Ireland Ltd
Atheist Ireland
Barnardos
Barretstown Camp
Bedford Row Family Project
BeLoNG To Youth Services
Bodywhys
Catholic Guides of Ireland
Child Law Project
Childhood Development Initiative
Children in Hospital Ireland
Children's Books Ireland
Children's Grief Centre
Clarecare
COPE Galway
Cork Life Centre
Cork Migrant Centre
Crann Centre
Crosscare
CyberSafeKids
Cycle Against Suicide
Dalkey School Project National School
Daughters of Charity Child and Family Service
Dental Health Foundation of Ireland
Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, UCC
Disability Federation of Ireland
Doras
Down Syndrome Ireland
Dublin Rape Crisis Centre
Dyslexia Association of Ireland
Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland
Early Childhood Ireland
Early Learning Initiative (National College of Ireland)
Educate Together
EPIC
Equality for Children
Extern Ireland
FamiliBase
Féach
Focus Ireland
Foróige
Gaeleoidéachas
Galway Traveller Movement
Good Shepherd Cork
Grow It Yourself
Helium Arts
Immigrant Council of Ireland
Inclusion Ireland
Institute of Guidance Counsellors
Irish Aftercare Network
Irish Association for Infant Mental Health
Irish Association of Social Workers
Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)
Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL)
Irish Foster Care Association
Irish Girl Guides
Irish Heart Foundation
Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO)
Irish Penal Reform Trust
Irish Primary Principals' Network
Irish Refugee Council
Irish Second Level Students' Union (ISSU)
Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
Irish Traveller Movement
Irish Youth Foundation
iScoil
Jack and Jill Children's Foundation
Jigsaw
Katharine Howard Foundation
Kerry Diocesan Youth Service
Kids' Own Publishing Partnership
Kinship Care
Leap Ireland
Let's Grow Together! Infant and Childhood Partnerships CLG.
LGBT Ireland
Mecpaths
Mental Health Reform
Mercy Law Resource Centre
Migrant Rights Centre Ireland
Mothers' Union
My Mind
My Project Minding You
Museum of Childhood Ireland
Music Generation
New Directions
National Childhood Network
National Council for the Blind of Ireland
National Forum of Family Resource Centres
National Parents Council Post Primary
National Parents Council Primary
National Youth Council of Ireland
Novas
One Family
One in Four
Parents Plus
Pavee Point
Peter McVerry Trust
Prevention and Early Intervention Network
Psychological Society of Ireland
Rainbow Club Cork
Rainbows Ireland
Rape Crisis Network Ireland (RCNI)
Realt Beag/Ballyfermot Star
Respond Housing
SAFE Ireland
Saoirse Housing Association
SAOL Beag Children's Centre
Scouting Ireland
School of Education UCD
Sexual Violence Centre Cork
SIPTU
Simon Communities of Ireland
Social Care Ireland
Society of St. Vincent de Paul
SPHE Network
SpunOut.ie
St. Nicholas Montessori College
St. Nicholas Montessori Teachers' Association
St. Patrick's Mental Health Services
TASC
Teachers' Union of Ireland
Terenure College Rugby Football Club
Transgender Equality Network Ireland
The Anne Sullivan Foundation
The Ark, A Cultural Centre for Children
The Irish Red Cross
The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway
Traveller Visibility Group Ltd
Treoir
UNICEF Ireland
Variety – the Children's Charity of Ireland
Women's Aid
Youngballymun
Young Social Innovators
Youth Advocate Programme Ireland (YAP)
Youth Work Ireland

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1. Introduction

The Children’s Rights Alliance unites over 145 members working together to make Ireland one of the best places in the world to be a child. We change the lives of all children by making sure their rights are respected and protected in our laws, policies and services. We also provide legal information and advice to children, young people and their families through our helpline and legal advice clinics.

Ireland has an international obligation under Article 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to ‘recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development’ and States are obliged to:

[...] take appropriate measures to assist parents and others responsible for the child to implement this right and shall in case of need provide material assistance and support programmes, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing.¹

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child is clear that implementation of children’s socio-economic rights is not a charitable process but a basic obligation of Government.² Ireland was last examined by the Committee in January 2023.³ In its Concluding Observations, the Committee urged Ireland to strengthen its response to child poverty by increasing social benefits, expanding school meals and addressing the root causes of homelessness.⁴ Furthermore the Committee called for measures that seek to combat poverty to take a child rights-based approach and that have a focus on families that are particularly disadvantaged such as children on one parent families, refugee children and those from ethnic minority groups.⁵

The annual poverty statistics captured by the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) provide important data on the proportion of the population experiencing poverty. When examined by age, children have the second highest risk of poverty rate at 15.2 per cent, equating to over 185,000 children. This rate is higher than the rate amongst the general population at 13.1 per cent.⁶ Households with children headed by one adult have a higher rate of 23.8 per cent versus those in two adult households (13.1 per cent).⁷

SILC measures a household’s experience of deprivation, i.e. the proportion of households unable to afford a set of 11 goods and services which are considered the norm for society. Over 235,000 children in Ireland experienced deprivation in 2022. While 17.7 per cent of the population experience deprivation the rate was higher amongst children (19.9 per cent) and in one parent families (43.5 per cent).⁸

Children are most vulnerable to consistent poverty, with a rate of 7.5 per cent (or 91,000 children) versus an overall rate of 5.3 per cent.⁹ Children living in households headed by a lone parent are significantly more vulnerable to consistent poverty at a rate of 14.1 per cent compared to 5.3 per cent of two parent families.¹⁰ While SILC provides important evidence on the levels of poverty and

¹ Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession on 20 November 1989) 1577 UNTS 3 (UNCRC). Ireland ratified the Convention in 1992.

² UNCRC ‘General Comment No. 5 General measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Arts. 4, 42 and 44) (2003) CRC/GC/2003/5 para 6.

³ UNCRC, ‘Concluding Observations Ireland’ (2023) UN Doc CRC/C/IRL/CO/5-6.

⁴ UNCRC, ‘Concluding Observations Ireland’ (2023) UN Doc CRC/C/IRL/CO/5-6, para 35.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Central Statistics Office, *Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2022* (CSO 2023).

⁷ Central Statistics Office, *Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2022* (CSO 2023).

⁸ Central Statistics Office, *Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2022* (CSO 2023).

⁹ Central Statistics Office, *Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2022* (CSO 2023).

¹⁰ Central Statistics Office, *Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2022* (CSO 2023).

deprivation amongst the population, a major shortcoming is that it does not provide data on certain cohorts such as the Traveller Community or those living in Direct Provision.

We are calling for Budget 2024 to be a Children's Budget – that places children and families most at risk of poverty and disadvantage at the very forefront of decision-making. We welcome the commitment from the Taoiseach at the National Economic Dialogue that child poverty and wellbeing will be a central focus of Budget 2024.¹¹ In this submission we set out the actions that each relevant government department can take to make this commitment a reality.

¹¹ Department of Finance, *Opening address by Taoiseach Leo Varadkar at the National Economic Dialogue (NED) 2023*, (12 June 2023).

2. Summary of Budget 2024 Asks

Department of Social Protection

Measures to Address Food Poverty: School Meals

- Realise the commitment made in response to the publication of the evaluation of the school meals programme to fund all DEIS schools to provide a hot school meal in 2024 and invest additional resources to ensure that all Special Schools and DEIS Secondary Schools can provide a hot school meal in 2024 [Estimated Cost: €14m].¹²
- Fund and develop a pilot initiative for the expansion of school meals during holiday time by leveraging existing community infrastructure and relationships between schools and summer camps.

Income Supports: Social Welfare Rates

- An increase of €10 per week for children under 12 and €15 per week for children over 12 is needed to retain the purchasing power of the Increase for a Qualified Child and make real progress on tackling child poverty.¹³

Department of Health

Access to Primary Healthcare

- Revise the income thresholds for the Medical Card to ensure that all families with children who are at risk of poverty will have access to a full Medical Card. At a minimum these should be set above the poverty thresholds.

Department of Education

Additional Supports in School

- Expand the Home School Community Liaison programme to non-DEIS schools on a phased basis.
- Increase the number of Educational Welfare Officers by 90 WTE in order to enhance the resources of TESS and to promote an early intervention approach to tackling educational disadvantage.

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

Supports for children at risk of or experiencing homelessness

- Ensure that every child living in homeless accommodation has a child and family support worker to help them to navigate the challenges they face in this situation.

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

Income Supports: Children in Direct Provision

- Increase the Direct Provision Daily Expenses Allowance for children living in Direct Provision from €29.80 to €42 for children under 12 and €50 for children over 12 in line with QCI and benchmark the payment in line with further QCI increases.
- Introduce the International Protection Child Payment for children living in Direct Provision at the same rate of the universal Child Benefit payment. In Budget 2024, to take account of the higher costs for older children, the rate should be set at €32 for children over 12 and €20 for children under 12.

¹² RSM, *Evaluation of the School Meals Programme*, (DSP 2023), Appendix 9.

¹³ Data from the Vincentian MESL Research Centre shows that an increase of €8.50 for children under 12 and €12.50 for children over 12 is needed to restore the Qualified Child Payment to 2020 levels in real terms. These figures assume that the €100 increase in the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance will be retained. The rate recommendation above these rates stems from the need to make progress on tackling child poverty, particularly among older children. Vincentian MESL Research Centre, *MESL Annual Update Report* (2023) https://www.budgeting.ie/download/pdf/mesl_2023_-_annual_update_report.pdf

Play and Recreation

- Appoint an expert on play in the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to lead the development of a new National Play Plan. The Plan should have a focus on the need for green spaces and recreational facilities in local communities. In developing this plan, a review should be carried out of what exists at local authority levels.
- Prioritise access to the arts and cultural events for children and young people who are experiencing poverty via increased central government investment in this area. Introduce an annual €30 subsidy to cover the cost of a child and an accompanying adult to attend one cultural or arts activity of their choice. Based on the population of under 18s in Census 2016, would cost an estimated €36 million.

Early Years

- Provide 98% of support for childcare for families on the lowest incomes by providing higher levels of subsidisation under the National Childcare Scheme for all families in receipt of the Medical Card. This can be done by amending the current IT system to include an additional field for Medical Card holders.
- Allocate sufficient funding in Budget 2024 to support the implementation of the first phase of the new Equal Participation Model. This should include a focus on wraparound services, provision of food and parental support.

Family Support

- Increase Tusla's overall budget by 1 per cent and ringfence this funding for Family Support Services. This funding should be utilised to increase the capacity of services in order to ensure more children and their families can access support [Cost: €9.4m].

3. Department of Social Protection

3.1 Measures to Address Food Poverty: School Meals

Budget 2024 Asks

- Realise the commitment made in response to the publication of the evaluation of the school meals programme to fund all DEIS schools to provide a hot school meal in 2024 and invest additional resources to ensure that all Special Schools and DEIS Secondary Schools can provide a hot school meal in 2024 [Estimated Cost: €14m].¹⁴
- Fund and develop a pilot initiative for the expansion of school meals during holiday time by leveraging existing community infrastructure and relationships between schools and summer camps.

Rationale

A survey published in February 2023 indicated that one-third of parents were always or sometimes worried about being unable to provide sufficient food for their children.¹⁵ Schools are an excellent setting to reach children, teachers, families and the surrounding community.¹⁶ They provide a social environment where children can access and enjoy food, without financial constraints.¹⁷ Ireland is unusual in the European Union (EU) context in not providing a universal school meal programme.¹⁸ However, a targeted School Meals Programme is funded by the Department of Social Protection. The programme provides funding towards the provision of food through the allocation of a per pupil rate for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Funding provided during the 2022/2023 school year, enabled 1,600 schools and organisations benefitting 260,000 children to take part in the scheme.¹⁹

An evaluation of the School Meals Programme was published in March 2023.²⁰ Amongst the key overall findings is that the programme is viewed as a positive initiative with many important impacts.²¹ The evaluation makes a number of important recommendations for further action.²² Most significantly, the evaluation recommends all children should receive a hot school meal and this should be achieved by taking a progressive universalist approach to expanding the programme.²³ In response to this, the Minister for Social Protection announced the expansion of the programme to all DEIS primary schools and special schools and that from 2024 hot meals will begin to be rolled on a phased basis to non-DEIS primary schools not currently delivering this option.²⁴ The Minister commits to universal provision by 2030 albeit with the ambition ‘to move faster’.²⁵ The universal provision of hot meals in a school setting counters stigma and provides a social environment where children can access and enjoy food without financial constraints.²⁶

The evaluation report raises concerns about the issue of ‘holiday hunger’.²⁷ This phenomenon relates to the inability of children to access ‘an adequate supply of nutritious food’ outside of school

¹⁴ RSM, *Evaluation of the School Meals Programme*, (DSP 2023), Appendix 9.

¹⁵ Barnardos, *Food Insecurity in Ireland – Impact on children and their parents*, (Barnardos 2023)

¹⁶ Healthy Food For All, *A Good Practice Guide to School Food Initiatives* (Healthy Food for All 2009).

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ Heather Humphries TD, Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, School Meals Programme, Written Answers, 18 April 2023 [17567/23].

²⁰ RSM, *Evaluation of the School Meals Programme*, (DSP 2023).

²¹ RSM, *Evaluation of the School Meals Programme*, (DSP 2023).

²² RSM, *Evaluation of the School Meals Programme*, (DSP 2023).

²³ RSM, *Evaluation of the School Meals Programme*, (DSP 2023).

²⁴ Department of Social Protection, ‘Minister Humphreys announces plans for roll-out of Hot School Meals to all Primary Schools’, <https://bit.ly/44Mfs8n> accessed 9 May 2023.

²⁵ Department of Social Protection, ‘Minister Humphreys announces plans for roll-out of Hot School Meals to all Primary Schools’, <https://bit.ly/44Mfs8n> accessed 9 May 2023.

²⁶ Healthy Food for All, *A good practice guide to School Food Initiatives* (Healthy Food for All 2009).

²⁷ RSM, *Evaluation of the School Meals Programme*, (DSP 2023).

term times.²⁸ Participants in the evaluation study noted the challenges with providing meals over the long summer holidays but principals in particular saw the potential in expanding the programme during shorter holiday periods such as Easter and mid-term.²⁹ Generally, the Irish school meals programme does not provide funding to cover school holidays or for days when the school is closed. There is a need to clearly identify a means of combatting holiday hunger.

3.2 Address the Cost-of-Living Crisis for Families dependent on Social Welfare

Budget 2024 Asks

- An increase of €10 per week for children under 12 and €15 per week for children over 12 is needed to retain the purchasing power of the Increase for a Qualified Child and make real progress on tackling child poverty.³⁰

Rationale

As noted in the introduction of this submission, annual poverty statistics captured by the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) highlight the incidence of poverty for children aged 0-17 in comparison to the entire population.

SILC 2022 Child Poverty Statistics

	At risk of Poverty	Deprivation	Consistent Poverty
State	13.1	17.7	5.3
0-17 age group	15.2	19.9	7.5
1 adult, with children under 18 years	23.8	43.5	14.1
2 adults, with 1-3 children under 18 years	13.1	17.7	5.3

Source: CSO Survey of Income and Living Conditions 2022

Further insight about the inadequacy of a household's income to meet all expenditure costs is provided in *SILC: Enforced Deprivation 2022* report. In 2022, 50.8 per cent of all households reported some level of difficulty (from great to little) in making ends meet with 5.9 per cent reporting great difficulty.³¹

Two adult households with children experienced a higher rate of difficult making ends meet than the general population (57.1 per cent and 5.8 per cent respectively).³² However, one parent families reported much higher rates across all levels of difficulty. Three-quarters of all one parent households (75.9 per cent) reported some level of difficulty making ends meet, with 9.8 per cent reporting great difficulty.³³ Research from the EU Fundamental Rights Agency found that in 2018 38 per cent of Traveller and Roma families experienced difficulties in making ends meet.³⁴

²⁸ Pamela L. Graham et al. *School Holiday Food Provision in the UK: A Qualitative Investigation of Needs, Benefits, and Potential for Development* *Frontiers in Public Health*, (2016) Vol. 4, Article 172.

²⁹ RSM, *Evaluation of the School Meals Programme*, (DSP 2023).

³⁰ Data from the Vincentian MESL Research Centre shows that an increase of €8.50 for children under 12 and €12.50 for children over 12 is needed to restore the Qualified Child Payment to 2020 levels in real terms. These figures assume that the €100 increase in the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance will be retained. The rate recommendation above these rates stems from the need to make progress on tackling child poverty, particularly among older children. Vincentian MESL Research Centre, *MESL Annual Update Report* (2023) https://www.budgeting.ie/download/pdf/mesl_2023_-_annual_update_report.pdf

³¹ Central Statistics Office, *Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC): Enforced Deprivation 2022* (CSO 2022).

³² Central Statistics Office, *Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC): Enforced Deprivation 2022* (CSO 2022).

³³ Central Statistics Office, *Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC): Enforced Deprivation 2022* (CSO 2022).

³⁴ European Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Roma and Travellers in six countries' (European Agency for Fundamental Rights) <<https://bit.ly/3zDz4yx>> accessed 15 June 2022

According to the CSO, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose by 7.7 per cent in the 12 months between March 2022 and 2023.³⁵

The impact of inflation has a varying impact on different groups in society depending on their individual consumption patterns.³⁶ The household budget of lower income households tends to largely comprise of necessities.³⁷ A more in-depth analysis of the items included in CPI highlights the growth in prices for essential costs such as food, clothing and energy. These particular price increases will have a profound impact on low-income families and presumably many of those who self-reported difficulty in making ends meet in the deprivation figures recorded by SILC 2022. In order to protect social welfare rates against further increases in the cost of living it is critical that social welfare rates are increased substantially in Budget 2024.

The cost-of-living crisis is no doubt impacting on these families who are in or at risk of poverty in a more pronounced way as well as expanding outwards the numbers struggling. Benchmarking social welfare rates to a Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL), is critical and could ensure that everyone can afford the minimum needed to participate in society.

³⁵ Central Statistics Office, *Consumer Price Index March 2023* (CSO 2023).

³⁶ TASC, *The state we are in: inequality in Ireland 2022* (TASC May 2022) 28.

³⁷ Ibid.

4. Department of Health

4.1 Access to primary healthcare

Budget 2024 Asks

- Revise the income thresholds for the Medical Card to ensure that all families with children who are at risk of poverty will have access to a full Medical Card. At a minimum these should be set above the poverty thresholds.

Rationale

In 2017, the expansion of primary care services, including the introduction of universal free GP care was recommended under *Sláintecare*. Under legislation introduced in 2020, Health (General Practitioner and Service and Alteration of Criteria for Eligibility) Act 2020, access to GP care will be extended for children under 13 years of age.³⁸ Funding was provided in Budget 2022 to cover the first of three phases of expansion.³⁹ This will see GP care provided for six and seven year olds in the first instance with the timing for further phases of expansion, to eight and nine year olds and 10 to 12 year olds yet to be announced. A re-commitment to the expansion of GP care to children under eight was outlined in Budget 2023.⁴⁰ However, the precise timing of when this will be rolled out remains unclear with the Minister for Health stating in March 2023 that it would be ‘as early as possible’.⁴¹

While it is welcome that free GP care will be extended on a universal basis for all children on a phased basis, a full Medical Card is essential for those in low-income households. This would ensure access to more extensive primary care services such as optical and aural services, prescriptions, and out-patient health services and medical appliances.⁴² Medical Card holders may also be exempt from paying school transport charges and exam fees.⁴³

As the full Medical Card is a targeted support, recipients generally must satisfy a means test.⁴⁴ Families whose income is derived solely from social welfare will normally qualify for the Medical Card. Other groups such as children in foster care and those living in Direct Provision qualify for the card without a means test.⁴⁵ However, those on low incomes from a combination of work and social welfare may not meet the criteria for qualification. This is due to the inadequacy of the income thresholds for the Medical Card. These rates have not been revised since 2005. The current Medical Card income threshold for a family of two adults with two children under 16 is €342.50 per week⁴⁶ while the poverty line for this household in 2022 was €692.16.⁴⁷ A review of these thresholds is required if coverage of the Medical Card is to be more comprehensive for those that need it.

The Public Health Nursing service provides one-to-one support for parents of all babies and is seen as having a key role in ensuring that babies and young children have access to primary, preventative and specialist healthcare.⁴⁸ Public health nurses play a critical role in advising and supporting parents and referring families to other interventions.⁴⁹ They are a consistent point of contact for parents and

³⁸ *Health (General Practitioner Service and Alteration of Criteria for Eligibility) Act 2020*.

³⁹ Department of Health, ‘Budget 2022: Minister Donnelly announces €21 billion, the biggest ever investment in Ireland’s health and social care services’ (Press Release 14 October 2021) <<https://bit.ly/3Ox9aRs>> accessed 15 June 2022.

⁴⁰ Government of Ireland, *Budget 2023: Expenditure Report*, (Department of Finance 2022).

⁴¹ Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly TD, Dáil Debates, Written Answers, General Practitioner Services, 21 March 2023 [12468; 13290/23].

⁴² Citizens Information ‘Medical Cards’ <<https://bit.ly/3ivgLAe>> accessed 01 June 2022.

⁴³ *ibid.*

⁴⁴ *ibid.*

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁷ Social Justice Ireland, *Poverty Focus 2022* (Social Justice Ireland 2022).

⁴⁸ Government of Ireland *First 5: A Whole of Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their families 2019-2028* (Stationery Office 2018).

⁴⁹ Children’s Rights Alliance, *The next programme for Government: Every Child Every Chance* (Children’s Rights Alliance 2020).

children in the first 3 years of a child's life⁵⁰ and are an important link through to early childhood education and care services, particularly prevention and early intervention services.

Public Health Nurses may lack the time and supports necessary to move away from primarily treating ill health and towards health promotion and early intervention in children's early years.⁵¹ The 2017 *Houses of the Oireachtas Committee on the Future of Healthcare Sláintecare Report* recommends investing in child health and well-being services by putting in place Public Health Nurses that are dedicated to child health work. *Sláintecare* also recommends the hiring of 900 community registered nurses to free up Public Health Nurses with specialist child training to carry out their child health work.⁵² *First 5: The Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028*, contains a related commitment;

‘in line with the principles set out in *Sláintecare*, develop a dedicated child health workforce, adopting a population-based approach, focussed initially in areas of high population density and disadvantage, recognising that this will require additional resources’.⁵³

Public Health Nurses remain, alongside General Practitioners and their Practice Nurses, the first and consistent point of contact for parents and children in the first three years of a child's life through the National Healthy Childhood Programme, and they play a critical role in advising and supporting parents and referring families to other interventions.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ Children's Rights Alliance, *The next programme for Government: Every Child Every Chance* (Children's Rights Alliance 2020).

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ Government of Ireland, *First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019 – 2028* (Government of Ireland 2018).

5. Department of Education

5.1 Expand targeted supports in school for children and young people experiencing disadvantage

Budget 2024 Asks

- Expand the Home School Community Liaison programme to non-DEIS schools on a phased basis.
- Increase the number of Educational Welfare Officers by 90 WTE in order to enhance the resources of TESS and to promote an early intervention approach to tackling educational disadvantage.

Rationale

Education has the power to transform lives, lift people out of poverty and break down cycles of disadvantage.⁵⁴ In Ireland, a person's socio-economic background remains a strong determining factor of their level of educational attainment. A person is almost three times more likely to go on to higher education if their parents have a higher education than someone whose parents have not completed primary-level education.⁵⁵ Living on a low income can prevent children and young people from participating fully in education.⁵⁶ Furthermore, those living in low income families during childhood are less likely to access post-second-level education than those living in higher income families.⁵⁷ Those with only primary education have an increased chance of being categorised as being at risk of poverty with research indicating that this can be up to 26 per cent higher than those with third level education.⁵⁸

The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, emphasises the promotion of school attendance, participation and retention.⁵⁹ The work of the Tusla Education Support Services is governed by this Act and comprises of the Statutory Educational Welfare Service (EWS), two school support services the Home School Community Liaison Scheme (HSCL) and the School Completion Programme (SCP).⁶⁰ The purpose of these services is to work collaboratively with schools, families and other services to ensure children and young people can obtain.⁶¹ Educational Welfare Officers (EWOs) play an important role, particularly in relation to early intervention, to support school attendance for children aged 6 to 16 years. There are currently 120 EWOs supporting 4,000 schools working on a referral basis where concerns arise regarding school attendance or where there is a risk of expulsion. EWOs engage in home visits and collaborative working with other agencies.

The Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) scheme is a key intervention provided as part of the DEIS programme. The HSCL coordinator, normally a teacher from a relevant school without teaching duties, works closely with parents and guardians to improve children and young people's educational outcomes.⁶² The primary way this intervention is delivered is through home visits⁶³ and the provision of courses and classes that enable parents to support a pupil's learning.⁶⁴

⁵⁴ Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection *Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025* (DEASP 2020) 48.

⁵⁵ Central Statistics Office, 'Census of Population 2016 – Profile 10 Education, Skills and the Irish Language' (CSO 2016) <<https://bit.ly/2FjtGyG>> accessed 28 June 2022.

⁵⁶ Joint Committee on Education and Skills *Report on education inequality and disadvantage and barriers to education* (Houses of the Oireachtas 2019).

⁵⁷ Sarah Curristan, Bertrand Maître and Helen Russell, *Intergenerational Poverty in Ireland*, (ESRI 2022).

⁵⁸ Sarah Curristan, Bertrand Maître and Helen Russell, *Intergenerational Poverty in Ireland*, (ESRI 2022).

⁵⁹ TUSLA, 'Tusla Education Support Services', [TESSTusla - Child and Family Agency](https://www.tusla.ie/child-and-family-agency) accessed 24 May 2023.

⁶⁰ TUSLA, 'Tusla Education Support Services', [TESSTusla - Child and Family Agency](https://www.tusla.ie/child-and-family-agency) accessed 24 May 2023.

⁶¹ TUSLA, 'Tusla Education Support Services', [TESSTusla - Child and Family Agency](https://www.tusla.ie/child-and-family-agency) accessed 24 May 2023.

⁶² TUSLA, 'HSCL-Home School Community Liaison', <https://bit.ly/43p4Jil> accessed 12 April 2023.

⁶³ The HSCL Co-ordinator plays an important role within the school community in terms of fostering inter-agency and inter-disciplinary work which can benefit the pupil.

⁶⁴ TUSLA, 'HSCL-Home School Community Liaison', <https://bit.ly/43p4Jil> accessed 12 April 2023.

Currently 693 schools categorised as DEIS Urban Primary and DEIS Post Primary that operate the HSCL scheme.⁶⁵ This equates to an equivalent of 530 Whole-Time-Equivalent (WTE) posts carrying out HCSL duties for a total of 207,000 pupils.⁶⁶ In recognition of the higher likelihood of experiencing educational disadvantage by Traveller and Roma children and young people, there has been a further targeted expansion of the HSCL. Whilst the overall educational attainment level of Irish Travellers increased between 2011 and 2016, with more Travellers completing secondary school than before, many still do not.⁶⁷ It is welcome therefore that four additional HSCL posts have been assigned as part of the pilot project established under the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy.⁶⁸ In October 2022, an allocation of €400,000 to the Department of Education under the 2022 Dormant Accounts Fund Action Plan for funding of 10 new HSCL coordinator posts in 14 non-DEIS post primary schools to support Traveller and Roma families. These HSCL co-ordinators will have access to funding to implement and run initiatives to encourage attendance, retention, and progression for Traveller and Roma pupils.⁶⁹ The support that HSCL provides to parents and guardians is critical for these families as research with Traveller and Roma parents has found that they want their children to have a better educational experience than they had.⁷⁰ In the absence of parents' direct experience or 'legacy knowledge' of secondary school, the research observed parents found it difficult to support their children in the transition between primary and secondary schools.⁷¹ Supporting transitions is a central part of the HSCL work⁷² and therefore provides an important intervention for this cohort of children to support their participation in education. There is a need to further expand access to HSCL supports as well as capturing the impact that this initiative is having on the educational outcomes of children experiencing educational disadvantage. Consideration could be given to appointing a HSCL Coordinator to a cluster of non-DEIS schools in order to maximise the impact this work can have in a community.

⁶⁵ Minister for Education, Norma Foley TD, Dáil Debates, Written Answers, 29 March 2023 [15552/23].

⁶⁶ Minister for Education, Norma Foley TD, Dáil Debates, Written Answers, 29 March 2023 [15552/23].

⁶⁷ Department of Children and Youth Affairs, *Statistical Spotlight #4, Young Travellers in Ireland* (DCYA 2020)32.

⁶⁸ Minister for Education, Norma Foley TD, Dáil Debates, Written Answers, 29 March 2023 [15552/23].

⁶⁹ Department of Education, 'Minister Foley announces 2022 Dormant Accounts Funding to provide targeted supports to improve educational outcomes for Traveller and Roma Students' (4 October 2022) < <http://bit.ly/3lsacVD> > accessed 30 January 2023.

⁷⁰ Maria Quinlan, *Out of the Shadows Traveller and Roma Education: Voices from the Communities* (Government of Ireland 2021), 14.

⁷¹ Maria Quinlan, *Out of the Shadows Traveller and Roma Education: Voices from the Communities* (Government of Ireland 2021), 14.

⁷² Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) and Department of Education, *Information Booklet for DEIS schools participating in the Home School Community Liaison Scheme* (

6. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

6.1 Provide additional supports for children living in Emergency Accommodation

Budget 2024 Asks

- Ensure that every child living in homeless accommodation has a child and family support worker to help them to navigate the challenges they face in this situation.

Rationale

The right to housing comes with a duty to monitor the numbers of people who are homeless and those at increased risk of being disadvantaged with regard to housing.⁷³ The numbers in homeless accommodation increased throughout 2022, with a small seasonal decline evident in December.⁷⁴ While there was some sign of a stagnation of the figures at the start of 2023, in April there were over 12,000 people living in Emergency Accommodation. These latest statistics show that there were 3,594 children living in Emergency Accommodation and 1,491 young people between the ages of 18 and 24 years.

Organisations working with families experiencing homelessness have identified a need for targeted interventions for children living in emergency accommodation. These interventions, which could be delivered by a dedicated child or family support worker, should provide tailored support to help children and their families deal with the trauma of homelessness and/or the challenges that they faced before becoming homeless, or in some instances both of these contexts. Such interventions can help children to address some of the detrimental impacts of homelessness and by extension, they help to reduce the pressure and stress on parents. This enables parents to engage much more fully both with supporting their children through a traumatic experience, as well as in the process of exiting homelessness.

Given the continued rise in the numbers of children living in emergency accommodation, and the dearth of properties available to support their exit, it is critical that the government provide tailored support to these children to mitigate against the trauma these children will experience. Child Support Workers are a vital link connecting families with specialist supports, therapeutic services, social workers, and schools. They work directly with children and support their well-being, with homework and where appropriate engage therapeutic interventions.

⁷³ *ibid* para 13.

⁷⁴ Keith Adams, 'Homelessness: Why Do The Figures Drop in December?', Blog post 3 February 2023, (Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice in Ireland).

7. Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

7.1 Income Supports for Children in Direct Provision

Budget 2024 Asks

- Increase the Direct Provision Daily Expenses Allowance for children living in Direct Provision from €29.80 to €42 for children under 12 and €50 for children over 12 in line with QCI and benchmark the payment in line with further QCI increases.
- Introduce the International Protection Child Payment for children living in Direct Provision at the same rate of the universal Child Benefit payment. In Budget 2024, to take account of the higher costs for older children, the rate should be set at €32 for children over 12 and €20 for children under 12.

Rationale

It is critical that all families with children are treated equally regarding access to social welfare income. In April 2023, approximately one in every five applicants for international protection was a child, with 4,331 children being accommodated by the International Protection Accommodation Service.⁷⁵ Children living in Direct Provision centres are at a high risk of consistent poverty although they are not counted in the official poverty statistics.

Children and young people in Direct Provision have spoken about how a lack of income means they have few opportunities to take part in activities with their friends and peers after school. The financial cost of school trips or the need to take public transport after sport activities is a major barrier in terms of integrating into the community.⁷⁶

Children in Direct Provision receive a weekly payment of €29.80 currently.⁷⁷ Historically the rate of the Daily Expense Allowance (DEA) has been significantly lower than other social welfare payments for children. For example, in 2013 the rate was €9.60 compared to €29.80 for the QCI paid to social welfare recipients.⁷⁸ The DEA rate has remained unchanged 2019 despite increases being applied the QCI and a separate rate being established for under and over 12s.⁷⁹ Families can also access the annual Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance Scheme and the Exceptional Needs Payment Scheme for assistance with necessary costs, such as buggies and clothing.⁸⁰

Children living in Direct provision system do not have access to child benefit payment given to all children habitually resident in the State. The *White Paper* committed to the introduction of a monthly International Protection Child Payment which would be provided at the same rate as Child Benefit,⁸¹ as they move into phase two accommodation.⁸² This has yet to happen. Not only was provision not made for those in the international protection system to receive a child benefit payment at a time when a double child welfare payment was introduced, they also do not qualify for the Increase for a Qualified Child (IQC) available to children whose parents are in receipt of social welfare payments.⁸³ This was the only group of children in Budget 2023 that did not receive any additional help to tackle the increased cost of living.

⁷⁵ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, *IPAS Weekly Accommodation Statistics – April 2023* (DCEDIY April 2023) <<https://bit.ly/41RYqUa>> accessed 25 April 2023.

⁷⁶ Ombudsman for Children, *Direct Division Children's views and experiences of living in Direct Provision* (OCO 2020) 28.

⁷⁷ Citizen's Information, *Direct Provision System* <<http://bit.ly/3S3dydD>> accessed 2 February 2023.

⁷⁸ Citizen's Information, *Budget 2023* <<https://bit.ly/3VP9Oyj>> accessed 9 May 2023.

⁷⁹ Citizen's Information, *Budgets* <<https://bit.ly/3LNBjdj>> accessed 9 May 2023.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

⁸¹ *ibid* 64-65.

⁸² Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth on 18 January 2022.

⁸³ Children's Rights Alliance, *Budget 2023 – What does it mean for Children and Young People?* (30 September 2022).

7.2 Place an emphasis on play at a policy level

Budget 2024 Asks

- Appoint an expert on play in the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to lead the development of a new National Play Plan. The Plan should have a focus on the need for green spaces and recreational facilities in local communities. In developing this plan, a review should be carried out of what exists at local authority levels.
- Prioritise access to the arts and cultural events for children and young people who are experiencing poverty via increased central government investment in this area. Introduce an annual €30 subsidy to cover the cost of a child and an accompanying adult to attend one cultural or arts activity of their choice. Based on the population of under 18s in Census 2016, would cost an estimated €36 million.

Rationale

Facilities provided at a local level play a significant role in the recreational lives of children and young people. These can include libraries, playgrounds, parks, etc. Policy makers should aim to ensure that the creation of safe spaces for families to gather and for children to play are a priority. Consideration should be given to the needs for safety, age-friendly, family-friendly and equitable access.⁸⁴

The Growing Up in Ireland survey found that nine per cent of mothers of nine-year-olds felt it was not safe to play outdoors in their local area during the day and 42 per cent felt there were no safe parks, playgrounds and play spaces in their local area.⁸⁵ Housing and communities that are not child or youth friendly, or are perceived by children and their parents to have unsafe public spaces, are associated with poverty, non-participation in play and recreational opportunities.⁸⁶ Analysis of data collected by Growing Up in Ireland during the Covid-19 pandemic examined the impact that local environment had on maternal mental health during this time and concludes that investment in green spaces ‘will pay dividends in supporting the mental wellbeing of women and their families’.⁸⁷ Children living in temporary accommodation and those living in Direct Provision centres do not have adequate access to safe play and recreation facilities.⁸⁸ A lack of access to a safe space to play for Traveller children was highlighted by the Ombudsman for Children’s Office report, *No End in Site*, which highlighted the inadequate conditions 66 children were living in.⁸⁹ The negative implications of play deprivation may be significant to a child’s development as play impacts their social, emotional, cognitive and physical development.⁹⁰ Play also has a crucial role in creating stronger bonds between parents and their children.⁹¹

First Five acknowledges the emergence of child-friendly approaches to local planning and design internationally, as well as the importance of local planning and delivery structures to the successful implementation of the strategy. The commitment in *First Five* to develop guidelines for local authorities on the development of child-friendly communities will ensure that children have ‘safe

⁸⁴ Woods CB, Powell C, Saunders JA, O’Brien W, Murphy MH, Duff C, Farmer O, Johnston A., Connolly S. and Belton S “The Children’s Sport Participation and Physical Activity Study 2018” (CSPPA 2018)

⁸⁵ Growing up in Ireland Study Team, *The Lives of 9-Year-Olds* (ESRI and TCD 2009)

⁸⁶ National Children’s Office, *Teenspace: National Recreation Policy for Young People* (The Stationery Office 2008) and National Children’s Office, *Ready, Steady! A National Play Strategy* (The Stationery Office 2004).

⁸⁷ James Laurence, Helen Russell, and Emer Smyth, *What Protected the Wellbeing of Mothers during the Pandemic?* (ESRI 2023).

⁸⁸ Kathy Walsh, and Brian Harvey, *Family Experiences of Pathways into Homelessness - The Families’ Perspective* (DRHE 2015) <<https://bit.ly/2UpaT4j>>; Working Group on the Protection Process, *Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers* (Working Group on the Protection Process 2015) para 1.59,2.22.

⁸⁹ Ombudsman for Children, *No End in Site* (OCO 2021).

⁹⁰ Milteer R and others, 'The Importance Of Play In Promoting Healthy Child Development And Maintaining Strong Parent Child Bond: Focus On Children In Poverty' (2012) 129 *Pediatrics*.

⁹¹ *ibid*.

environments to play, explore and learn'.⁹² It is welcome that a review of existing guidelines has been completed as part of this action, but further progress is needed on the development of best practice in the incorporation of child-centred approach to planning.⁹³ Some local councils, such as Laois County Councils have developed recreation and play strategies that plan for the continued development of Sport, Recreation and Play,⁹⁴ however a national play plan is needed to ensure that this is consistent throughout the country and that there is a focus on the provision of green spaces in local communities for children and young people.

7.3 Increase investment in Early years with a focus on supporting families experiencing disadvantage

Budget 2024 Asks

- Provide 98% of support for childcare for families on the lowest incomes by providing higher levels of subsidisation under the National Childcare Scheme for all families in receipt of the Medical Card. This can be done by amending the current IT system to include an additional field for Medical Card holders.
- Allocate sufficient funding in Budget 2024 to support the implementation of the first phase of the new Equal Participation Model. This should include a focus on wraparound services, provision of food and parental support.

Rationale

There is a need to poverty proof the ECEC system. To support parental labour market participation, *Investing in Children* calls for all families, particularly those in vulnerable situations and in disadvantaged areas to have access to ECEC. An analysis of OECD data indicates that supporting parents from low-income families to participate in full-time employment is a critical objective in terms of significantly reducing child poverty.⁹⁵ Notwithstanding this, challenges exist in relation to accessing work with decent pay and conditions and a substantial number of households continue to experience in-work poverty.⁹⁶ Children from disadvantaged backgrounds benefit most when ECEC services are closely linked to employment, health and social policies that promote a more equal distribution of resources across a population.⁹⁷

The OECD is clear that if ECEC is not sufficiently subsidised, fewer children from disadvantaged backgrounds participate in it.⁹⁸ This echoes the concerns made by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in relation to discrimination in early childhood where the provision of services does not follow a universal model.⁹⁹ The State needs to provide free (or nearly free access to ECEC, for example, a small contribution of no more than €10 for people on the lowest incomes) for parents living in consistent poverty. This would include those currently on welfare payments or in low paid jobs.

⁹² Government of Ireland, *First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019 – 2028* (Government of Ireland 2018)

⁹³ DCEDIY, *First Five Annual Implementation Plan 2019* (2019) 82.

⁹⁴ Laois County Council. 'The Recreation, Play and Sports Strategy 2018-2022' <<https://laois.ie/departments/sport-and-leisure/the-recreation-play-and-sports-strategy-2018-2022/>> accessed 1 July 2022.

⁹⁵ Daly, M. *Fighting Child Poverty: The Child Guarantee* (European Parliament 2019), 5

⁹⁶ Social Justice Ireland 'Substantial portion of workers cannot achieve a socially acceptable standard of living'. <https://bit.ly/2X8w78p> accessed 13 October 2021.

⁹⁷ John Bennet, *ECEC for children from disadvantaged backgrounds: findings from a European literature review and two case studies* (European Commission 2013).

⁹⁸ OECD, *Education at a Glance 2019: OECD Indicators*. (OECD 2019) 165.

⁹⁹ UNCRC, General Comment No.7: Implementing child rights in early childhood' (2006) UN Doc CRC/C/GC/7/Rev.1 para 12.

First 5 committed to develop a Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) type model for early childhood education and care.¹⁰⁰ The Report of the Expert Group on the Funding Model addresses this commitment by recommending the introduction of a new funding stream to tackle socio-economic disadvantage.¹⁰¹ The report proposes two funding strands, universal and targeted, to tackle disadvantage. The universal strand will build on elements of the Access Inclusion Model (AIM) and the targeted strand will be informed by the (DEIS) programme. Enhancements to existing programmes are also recommended.¹⁰²

Work on the development of this targeted model of early years is currently underway. This new strand of funding – currently known as Equal Participation Model – will provide a mix of universal and targeted supports through services accessed by children and families experiencing disadvantage.¹⁰³ Traveller and Roma children are key cohorts in this model. A scoping phase has already been completed and the DCEDIY are currently undertaking consultations and engagement following a presentation of the model at the Early Learning and Care Stakeholder in December and proposals will be brought to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in 2023.¹⁰⁴

7.4 Increase the capacity of Parenting and Family Support Services

Budget 2024 Asks

- Increase Tusla’s overall budget by 1 per cent and ringfence this funding for Family Support Services. This funding should be utilised to increase the capacity of services in order to ensure more children and their families can access support [Cost: €9.4m].

Rationale

State-delivered or state-funded services are particularly pertinent for those in or at risk of poverty as they may not have the means to access support through their own means.¹⁰⁵ Children can be exposed to adversity at both the family and community level.¹⁰⁶ While the presence of poor parental mental health, domestic violence and addiction can occur across the socioeconomic spectrum of families¹⁰⁷ for those experiencing poverty these issues can be particularly prevalent.¹⁰⁸ The involvement of children in serious crime has been found to be an issue in communities across Ireland with disadvantaged areas and communities with high levels of anti-social behaviour common factors associated with prevalence.¹⁰⁹

It is possible to intervene and improve the life chances of children experiencing poverty-related adversity by providing early childhood interventions to children and to their parents.¹¹⁰ Family

¹⁰⁰ Government of Ireland, *First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019 – 2028* (Government of Ireland 2018) strategic action 8.3.

¹⁰¹ Expert Group on the Funding Model, *Partnership for the Public Good: A New Funding Model for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare* (DCEDIY 2021) 119.

¹⁰² *ibid.*

¹⁰³ Communication received by the Children’s Rights Alliance from Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 11 January 2023.

¹⁰⁴ Communication received by the Children’s Rights Alliance from Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 11 January 2023.

¹⁰⁵ Morag Traynor, ‘Poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)’ (Children 1st, 27 September 2018) <<https://bit.ly/3f4T7LF>> accessed 21 May 2021.

¹⁰⁶ Ellis, Wendy R. and William H. Dietz, ‘A New Framework for Addressing Adverse Childhood and Community Experiences: The Building Community Resilience Model’ (2017) *Frameworks and Measurement*, 17(7).

¹⁰⁷ Morag Traynor, ‘Poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)’ (Children 1st, 27 September 2018) <<https://bit.ly/3f4T7LF>> accessed 21 May 2021.

¹⁰⁸ There is limited research on the prevalence of ACEs in Ireland (examples include Sharon Lambert, Graham Gill-Emerson, et.al., *Moving Towards Trauma Informed Care. A model of research and practice*, (Cork Simon Community 2017); Aoife Dermody A., Sharon Lambert et al., (2020) *An Exploration of Early Life Trauma and its Implications for Garda Youth Diversion Projects* (Youthrise and Quality Matters 2020). Internationally some research indicates there is a connection between child poverty and the prevalence of ACEs.

¹⁰⁹ Catherine Naughton, and Sean Redmond, *National Prevalence Study Do the findings from the Greentown study of children’s involvement in criminal networks (2015) extend beyond Greentown?* (DCYA, DoJ, Irish Youth Justice Service and University of Limerick 2017) <<https://bit.ly/340hZOj>> accessed 20 May 2021.

¹¹⁰ Katherine A. Beckmann, ‘Mitigating Adverse Childhood Experiences through Investments in Early Childhood Programs’, (September – October 2017), *Academic Paediatrics*, 17(7), Supplement, S28–S29.

Support is an umbrella term under which clusters a broad range of family-focused services and programmes. It is concerned with anticipating, recognising and responding to the needs of families, especially during a time of difficulty¹¹¹ and can be defined as:

“both a style of work and a set of activities which reinforce positive informal social networks through integrated programmes. These programmes combine statutory, voluntary and community and private services and are generally provided to families in their own homes and communities. The primary focus is on early intervention aiming to promote and protect the health, well-being and rights of all children, young people and their families paying particular attention to those who are vulnerable or at risk”.¹¹²

However, over time, since this definition was developed in a Departmental paper in 2004, a lack of clarity has emerged as to what public funding is provided for these services as noted in a recently published spending review from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.¹¹³ The review notes the difficulty in isolating costs and activities related to Family Support services from Tusla’s overall budget.¹¹⁴ The report notes this is because the landscape of these services ‘is complex and diverse, featuring overlapping networks of service providers and stakeholders, varying levels of need, and a wide range of funding structures’.¹¹⁵

While the review calls for greater clarity, to strengthen future research in this area, it calculated that expenditure on Family Support Services rose from €105.5m in 2018 to €125.1m in 2021 representing an 18.6 per cent increase.¹¹⁶ The vast majority of this funding, was provided to Community and Voluntary sector organisations delivering services on Tusla’s behalf.¹¹⁷ As a proportion of overall Tusla spending, Family Support services comprise 13-14 per cent over the four year period examined in the report (2018-2021).¹¹⁸ There is evidence that leading family support providers have experienced an increase in demand for their services, both in terms of need and complexity, which has resulted in many families and children being placed on waiting lists.¹¹⁹ Longer waiting times result in increased complexity of cases, pressure to close cases prematurely and missed opportunities to intervene early.¹²⁰ Consultations with parents have indicated that many feel unsupported and that there is a lack of awareness about the supports in their area and that where supports existed it was fragmented.¹²¹

¹¹¹ Department of Children and Youth Affairs, *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020* (DCYA 2014).

¹¹² Pinkerton et al, *Family Support in Ireland. A paper for the Department of Health & Children* (The Stationery Office 2004), 16.

¹¹³ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, *Tusla Funded Community and Voluntary Sector Family Support Services – Spending Review 2022*, (DCEDIY 2023), 6.

¹¹⁴ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, *Tusla Funded Community and Voluntary Sector Family Support Services – Spending Review 2022*, (DCEDIY 2023), 6.

¹¹⁵ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, *Tusla Funded Community and Voluntary Sector Family Support Services – Spending Review 2022*, (DCEDIY 2023), 6.

¹¹⁶ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, *Tusla Funded Community and Voluntary Sector Family Support Services – Spending Review 2022*, (DCEDIY 2023), 6.

¹¹⁷ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, *Tusla Funded Community and Voluntary Sector Family Support Services – Spending Review 2022*, (DCEDIY 2023), 6.

¹¹⁸ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, *Tusla Funded Community and Voluntary Sector Family Support Services – Spending Review 2022*, (DCEDIY 2023), 6.

¹¹⁹ Just Economics, *Breaking point: Why investment is needed now to ensure the sustainability of quality services for children and families*, (Barnardos 2019).

¹²⁰ Barnardos, *Children’s Budget 2020*, (Barnardos 2019) <<https://bit.ly/36uE9dW>> accessed 4 October 2020.

¹²¹ Grainne Hickey and Yvonne Leckey, *Irish parents’ experiences of support and parenting support services*, (DCEDIY 2021).