

Child Poverty and Budget 2025

Dear Sir,

As representatives of leading organisations working with and on behalf of children, young people and their families in communities across Ireland, we feel compelled to raise our concerns on the current direction of travel of some budget proposals.

As we enter a period of sustained focus on Budget decisions, we are concerned that the current political discourse is focused on supporting families by putting increased resources into the universal Child Benefit payment. In recent years, double Child Benefit payments have played an important role in dealing with the cost-of-living crisis. However, they have been very costly and were not sufficient to help the families on the lowest incomes. If this Government is to uphold its commitment to make meaningful progress towards reducing poverty, they need to use Budget 2025 to target resources towards the most effective actions to break the cycle of child poverty.

The latest statistics published by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) shows that children have the highest rates of poverty in the country. In the past two years, while there has been a marginal decrease in the 'at risk' of poverty rate for children, the number of children experiencing deprivation has increased. Research published two weeks ago by the ESRI found that one-in-five children were living in families experiencing deprivation. This means they were unable to afford basic goods and services that are considered essential for a minimum standard of living, such as having a roast dinner once a week, being able to afford a warm coat or keeping their home heated.

We are calling on the Government to prioritise raising the Increase for a Qualified Child (IQC) by a minimum of €6 for children under 12 and, in recognition of the additional costs of older children, €15 for over 12s. The cost of this targeted measure is approximately €136.8 million. In contrast, a double payment of Child Benefit would cost significantly more at approximately €170 million.

In this Government's final budget, we do not believe that raising this targeted payment is too much to ask. It is a call for supports that enable these families to keep milk in the fridge that week, to buy a packet of vests or a raincoat for the winter months or afford the pair of football boots so their teenager can play with their friends. Failing to deliver effective and sufficient targeted supports, in favour of bonus payments for all, denies these children and young people their basic dignity. We know these children and their families. We do not want to tell them in October that the Government has left them behind again.

Yours sincerely,

Tanya Ward – Chief Executive, Children's Rights Alliance

Suzanne Connolly – CEO, Barnardos

Conor Hickey – CEO, Crosscare

Alex Cooney – CEO and Co-Founder, CyberSafeKids

Teresa Heeney – CEO, Early Childhood Ireland

Emer Nowlan – CEO, Educate Together

Colin Hayburn – CEO, Extern Ireland

Shaunie Kelly – Child & Family Manager, FamiliBase

Fergal Landy – CEO, Family Resource Centre National Forum

Mike Allen – Director of Advocacy, Research and Communications, Focus Ireland

Charlotte O'Donovan – School Connect Programme, Good Shepherd Cork

Siân Muldowney – ICON Coordinator, Inner City Organisations Network (ICON) Ltd.

Chairperson, Irish Aftercare Network

Saoirse Brady – Executive Director, Irish Penal Reform Trust

Jack McGinn – Uachtarán/President, Irish Second Level Students' Union (ISSU)

Lucy Masterson – Chief Executive, Irish Youth Foundation

Berni Smyth – CEO, Kerry Diocesan Youth Services (KDYS)

Marna Carroll – Services Director, Laoise Domestic Abuse Service

Dr. Michelle Walsh – CEO, MOVE Ireland

Rosaleen Molloy – National Director, Music Generation

Michelle Hart – CEO, National Childhood Network

Mary Cunningham – CEO, National Youth Council of Ireland

Karen Kiernan - CEO, One Family

Dr. Maria O’Dwyer – The National Coordinator, Prevention and Early Intervention Network (PEIN)

Katie O’Keefe – Child & Youth Services Manager, Saoirse Domestic Violence Services

Ian Power – CEO, SpunOut.ie

Nessan Vaughan – Chair of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul’s Social Justice Committee

Aiden Howard – Director, The Ark – A Cultural Centre for Children

Michael Gillespie – General Secretary, Teachers Union Ireland (TUI)

Damien Peelo - Chief Executive Officer, Treoir

Odhrán Allen – Chief Executive Officer, Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland

Stuart Buchanan – Head of Children & Family Services, YMCA Dublin

Sarah Benson – CEO, Women’s Aid