

END CHILD POVERTY

MAKE WORK PAY



**PRE-BUDGET
SUBMISSION 2017**
#EndChildPoverty
#Budget2017

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BUDGET 2017

INVEST IN SERVICES AND TARGETED INCOME SUPPORTS

CONTEXT FOR BUDGET 2017

- ¹ Child poverty rates have dramatically increased since 2008¹ and the Government has now committed to lifting 97,000 children out of consistent poverty by 2020 as part of the *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* framework. The focus of these targets must be on children living in one-parent families. Children living in one-parent families are twice as likely to live in poverty² and they live in the most socially excluded families in Ireland³.
- ² Recent reforms of the One-Parent Family Payment⁴ (OFP), increased taxes and the economic downturn have resulted in more one-parent families being unemployed⁵ and higher rates of child poverty in these families.
- ³ Job Seeker's Transition Payment (JST) recipients must be seen as a distinct group with a specific set of needs. The time spent on JST is a unique opportunity to invest in a package of supports and services to ensure success for these parents.
- ⁴ Labour market reforms need to acknowledge the importance of balancing parenting and work. Some of the specific challenges for one-parent families include lack of affordable childcare, low pay and precarious work such as zero-hour contracts. Policies are needed which promote access to employment, support the work of parenting and offer more flexible work contracts.

ONE FAMILY'S KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUDGET 2017

Targeted Income Supports To Make Work Pay

- ¹ Reinstate the income disregard for JST and OFP to €146.50 to enable parents to enter or stay in work.
- ² Enable JST and OFP recipients to participate in Community Employment by providing an additional €50 per week (up from €22.50). Community Employment can serve as an effective bridging programme to support those distant from the labour market in transitioning back into employment.
- ³ Lone parents who are in employment, whose children are aged between 7 and 14, should receive both Jobseeker's Transition Payment and Family Income Supplement, if they meet the qualifying criteria.
- ⁴ Reduce the qualifying hours for Family Income Supplement to 15 for those with children aged 7-14, in recognition of the difficulties lone parents can face in increasing their hours to 19 per week.
- ⁵ Amend the administration of the Single Person Child Carer Credit (SPCCC) to reflect the realities of sharing parenting and reinstate the SPCCC to both parents who share parenting of their children.

¹ SILC, 2008-2014

² SILC, 2014

³ Eurostat, 2016

⁴ See One Family's analysis here: <https://onefamily.ie/policy-campaigns/one-family-campaigns/one-parent-family-payment-reform-child-poverty/>

⁵ CSO QNHS, Q2 2015

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Targeted Income Supports for the Poorest Children

- 1 The Qualified Child Increase should be increased for one-parent families most at risk of poverty, to the same weekly amount as Child Benefit (i.e. €32.30 per week, up from €29.80) with a corresponding higher increase in the QCI payment for older children.
- 2 Restore the rates of Back to School Clothing & Footwear Allowance to €200 for 4-12 year olds and €305 for children over 12 years.

Early Years, Out-of-School and Afterschool Childcare

- 1 Roll-out commitments made in Budget 2016 to deliver a single subsidised childcare scheme from 2017, replacing the current targeted schemes. The provision of affordable, accessible and quality childcare, including early years and out-of-school care, should be seen as an economic issue which supports families to enter and remain in the workforce.
- 2 Increase accessibility so that families in every county can access subsidised and affordable childcare, with particular emphasis on access to out-of-school care. This includes offering appropriate subvention rates to private providers to increase uptake and availability of places.

Housing & Homelessness

- 1 Act now, and take preventative measures, on the ongoing crisis of one-parent families entering homelessness.⁶ Increasing the supply of social housing is the only sustainable solution to the housing and homelessness crisis; and to tackle housing insecurity and lack of affordability.
- 2 Rental controls should be introduced to cap rental prices in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Access to Education & Training

- 1 Provide specialist bridging programmes such as Career Futures and New Steps⁷ for lone parents, which support progression, job-readiness and incorporate wrap around parenting and family support services.
- 2 Extend JST to those parents who are engaging in education, regardless of the age of their youngest child (up to a limit of 18). Ability to stay in education should not be linked to housing tenure – allow those in receipt of Rent Supplement to engage in full time education. This would remove a number of structural barriers which currently prevent these parents from accessing education.
- 3 Make Back To Education Allowance (BTEA) and the SUSI maintenance grant payable together to lone parents who are undertaking an educational or training course, for the duration of the course.

⁶ 66% of homeless families are one-parent families, Dept. of Environment, May 2016

⁷ <https://onefamily.ie/education-training/for-parents/back-to-work-education/career-futures/>

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