

## Budget 2019

### *What does it mean for Children and Young People?*

The Children's Rights Alliance has summarised Budget 2019 from a children and young person's perspective.

Importantly, Budget 2019 made a clear commitment to put children and families first by prioritising a number of measures aimed at lifting children and families out of poverty. Welcome measures including the increasing in the amount that children in receipt of social welfare receive. Over 12s will get an extra €5.20 per week.

The increase in the earnings disregards for lone parents in receipt of One Parent Family Payment, the increase in Weekly Allowance for children in Direct Provision, the increase in capitation rates for schools, the increase in Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance and the increase in threshold for obtaining GP Visit Cards are all small changes but ones that will have an impact on children and young people.

The announcement to introduce paid parental leave for two weeks for each parent is welcome. The announcement to increase the income thresholds for the Affordable Childcare Scheme (ACS) which will be launched by the end of 2019 are also welcome as it will mean that a greater number of children should benefit from the scheme. However, we know that there are issues around capacity, low pay and retention of staff in early years services that will be need to be addressed.

For our reaction see our press release [here](#) or check out our Twitter feed which will be updated with Budget reaction throughout the coming days.

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### Children and Youth Affairs

The total budget allocated to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs for 2019 is €1.5 billion, an additional €127 million on Budget 2018.

*Our response:*

Budget 2019 increased investment in the Affordable Childcare Scheme. The changes in income thresholds are welcome as they enable more children access to the scheme than was originally envisaged when the scheme was announced in Budget 2017. In addition €32 million of extra funding is to be made available in 2019 to respond to the increasing demand for the 'September Measure's, the interim childcare subsidies that will be replaced by the Affordable Childcare Scheme.

We welcome the increase in funding for Tusla, the Child and Family Agency and the announcement that funding has been secured for the One House Model for child victims. We look forward to hearing details of the investment and roadmap for the project.

While we welcome the allocation of funding for the regulation of school-age childcare services, we are disappointed that the steps necessary to begin the regulation the childminding services has not received the same level of funding. However, we do acknowledge the funding allocated to Childminding Support Officers to support the registration of eligible childminders with Tusla. We are disappointed to see only an additional €1.5million funding allocated to youth services nationwide.

*Expenditure measures announced include:*

- €33 million increase in the allocation to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, comprised of:
  - €25 million to maintain existing levels of service delivery in 2019.
  - €2 million for capital projects including refurbishment and ICT investment project.
  - €6 million to:
    - Implement recommendations made by HIQA on the management of child abuse allegations.
    - Deliver on Government's commitments relating to unaccompanied minors under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme.
    - Address cost pressures in private residential and foster care.
    - Invest in and develop the Family Resource Centres network and domestic, sexual and gender based violence services.
- Allocation of €28 million to continue to support Oberstown Children Detention Campus to meet its operational costs in 2019.
- Funding allocated for the One House Victims Services pilot project.
- An increase in current funding of €89 million for Early Years services, including:
  - €61 million for the implementation of the Affordable Childcare Scheme and the September Measures.
  - Funding to enable the adjustment of the income eligibility thresholds and child deduction thresholds for targeted subsidies under the ACS from €22,700 to €26,000 net for the minimum income threshold and from €47,500 to €60,000 net for the maximum income threshold.
  - Additional funding of €10 million to the Access and Inclusion Model.

- €500,000 to create a team of Childminding Support Officers to support the registration of eligible childminders with Tusla.
  - €450,000 to support Tusla Early Years Inspectorate to begin registering after school services in 2019.
  - 4 per cent increase in the Programme Support Payment.
- Additional €32 million in funding for the Community Childcare Subvention programme.
  - An increase of €1.5m to support youth work programmes and to implement the LGBTI Strategy and National Youth Strategy.
  - An additional €1 million to support the area based approach to child poverty (Area Based Childhood programme).
  - An additional €1 million for innovation projects under the Intervention Programmes for children and young people such as the Quality and Capacity Building Initiative and youth employment initiatives.
  - Funding allocated to establish the Guardian ad Litem national executive office.
  - Additional funding for the Adoption Authority of Ireland to enable it to meet its increased responsibilities under the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill.

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## Education and Skills

The total Education budget allocated to the Department of Education and Skills for 2019 will be €10.8 billion, An additional €674 million on last year's budget allocation.

*Our response:*

This year has seen continued investment in education. The focus on children with special needs is warmly welcomed. The increase of Special Needs Assistants and resource teachers will give added support to those who need it. The increase in capitation rates for schools will help ease the financial burden placed on parents when sending their children to school. However, no additional funding has been available to make school books free and parents will continue to pay school enrolment fees.

*Expenditure measures announced include:*

- Schools will receive a five per cent increase in capitation rates from September 2019. Over the course of the 2019/2020 school year, an additional €10 million in funding will be allocated to primary and post primary schools.
- 1,300 teaching posts in schools in 2018:
  - 271 extra teachers to meet demographic need

- An additional 101 teaching posts in special classes
- An additional 950 Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)
- Allocation of close to €5 million to support the implementation of the Comprehensive Review of the SNA scheme, intended to support a new school inclusion model to deliver supports to students with additional needs.
- Allocation of an additional €196 million of capital for education which will support:
  - The creation of up to 18,000 additional school places and 5,000 replacement places in 2019.
  - Acquiring new sites for school buildings.
  - The summer work scheme and emergency work scheme.
- Under the National Development Plan, up to 23,000 new and replacement schools will be created in 2019. €50 million has been allocated to further the roll out of updated ICT infrastructure in all schools.
- €1 million allocated to support the school leadership and wellbeing programme, including the recruitment of 10 additional psychologists to the National Education Psychological Service to support wellbeing in schools.

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## Health

The total Budget allocated to the Department of Health for 2019 is €17 billion.

### *Our response:*

We are disappointed that Free GP care for under 12s has been downgraded to a long term objective. However, we welcome the €25 increase in the threshold for the GP visit cards in Budget 2019. This measure will help increase access to primary care for some of the most vulnerable children in Ireland. We welcome the extra funding allocated to create 100 new therapy posts to address the backlog in assessment of need applications for children with disabilities and we urge that these posts are filled as a matter of urgency. While there was an increase in funding for mental health services, it is not clear what specific funding has been allocated to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in Budget 2019.

### *Expenditure measures announced include:*

- €206 million allocated to the implementation of Sláintecare. Including:
  - A new €20 million Sláintecare Integration Fund to drive improvements in the way care is delivered in Ireland.
  - Costs associated with the development of a new GP contract.
  - An additional €55 million to continue the development of mental health services, particularly community services, in line with the *Vision for Change* strategy.

- €2.5 million to create 100 new therapy posts to address the backlog in assessment of need applications for children with disabilities.
  - €6.7 million for the continued progression of the National Children's Hospital.
- €25 increase in the weekly income thresholds for GP visit cards.
  - Funding to extend the HPV vaccination to boys.
  - €75 million in funding for the National Treatment Purchase Fund to reduce waiting times in line with Sláintecare goals.

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## Employment Affairs and Social Protection

The total Budget allocated to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection for 2019 is close to €20.5 billion, an increase of €725 million from Budget 2018.

*Our response:*

We warmly welcome the host of child poverty measures that have been introduced in Budget 2019. The introduction of a higher rate of qualified child increase for children over 12 will help families cope with the higher costs of raising teenagers. The increase in the weekly earning disregards for lone parents in receipt of One Parent Family Payment will go some way to mitigating the damaging effects of poverty felt by children in one parent families. The establishment of new pilot Hot Schools Meals programme will help combat food poverty experienced by many children and young people, although we would highlight the need to continue these meal programmes through school holidays to ensure that children have access to hot meals all year round, not just in term time. The decision to increase the Weekly Allowance for children in Direct Provision to the level recommended in the McMahon report is a welcome but long overdue measure.

*Expenditure measures announced include:*

- Introduction of two weeks paid parental leave per parent, with the view to increasing parental leave by seven weeks over a number of years.
- Targeted weekly increases of €5.20 per child over the age of 12 and €2.20 per child under the age of 12 in the qualified child increase payment.
- An increase in the earnings disregard for the One Parent Family Payment and Jobseeker's Transitional scheme by €20 per week, from €130 to €150 per week.
- Introduction of a maintenance disregard on the Working Family Payment.

- An increase in the Daily Expense Allowance for children in Direct Provision to €29.80 as per the McMahon Report Recommendation.
- An increase of €25 euro on the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance, up to €150 for children aged four to 11 and €275 for children over the age of 12.
- Increase in the minimum wage by 25 cent to €9.80 per hour.
- Increase of €5 on the maximum weekly rate of all social welfare payments.
- Restoration of 100 per cent Christmas Bonus paid to 1.2 million people in December 2018.
- Funding for new Hot School Meals Pilot Programme for DEIS schools to be commenced in 2019 and provide a hot dinner for 7,000 children initially.

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## Housing, Planning and Local Government

The total Budget allocated to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government for 2019 is €4 billion.

*Our response:*

While there was an increase in funding allocated towards housing in Budget 2019, we are concerned that the measures will not go far enough to help the 3,693 children living in homelessness. Allocating extra funding for Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) tenancies does not take into account the fact that many HAP recipients cannot find accommodation within the specified HAP limits. While it is welcome that extra funding has been allocated to homeless services, including the extension of family hubs, the fact remains that family hubs are a short-term solution and long-term social housing solutions are urgently needed.

*Expenditure measures announced include:*

- An overall allocation of €2.4 billion to support the housing needs of 27,400, an increase of 25 per cent on 2018's funding.
- Allocation of €1.4 billion in capital funding, in part allocated to deliver 7,900 new social homes through building and acquisition programmes.
- Increase in funding to €310 million for affordable housing through the services site fund over the next three years.
- Allocation of an additional €60 million in capital spending specifically targeted at tackling homelessness through enabling the implementation of a range of sustainable housing solutions for homeless households, including the further roll

out of family hubs.

- Allocation of €13 million to support a range of Traveller Specific accommodation schemes.
  - €423 million to support more than 16,700 additional households to be accommodated through HAP in 2019, as well as continuing to support those households already in tenancies at the end of 2018.
  - Allocation of €134 million to support the continuation of Rental Accommodation Scheme with 600 new tenancies joining the scheme in 2019.
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