

Analysis of Budget 2010 and its Impact on Children

December 2009





The Children's Rights Alliance is a coalition of over 90 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working to secure the rights and needs of children in Ireland, by campaigning for the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). It aims to improve the lives of all children under 18, through securing the necessary changes in Ireland's laws, policies and services.

Membership

The Alliance was formally established in March 1995. Many of its member organisations are prominent in the children's sector – working directly with children on a daily basis across the country. The Alliance's policies, projects and activities are developed through ongoing collaboration and consultation with its member organisations. A full list is at the back of this document.

Vision

Ireland will be one of the best places in the world to be a child

Mission

To realise the rights of children in Ireland through securing the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

10 December 2009

This is an in-house publication.

©2009 Children's Rights Alliance – Republic of Ireland Limited

The Children's Rights Alliance is a registered charity – CHY No. 11541

For any enquiries or to obtain additional copies of this document, please contact:

Children's Rights Alliance
4 Upper Mount Street
Dublin 2

Tel: +353.1.662 9400

Fax: +353.1.662 9355

Email: info@childrensrights.ie Web: www.childrensrights.ie

CONTENTS

I.	OVERVIEW OF BUDGET 2010	1
II.	ANALYSIS OF BUDGET 2010	3
	1. Social Welfare.....	5
	2. Education.....	8
	3. Health	10
	4. Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs	11
	5. Additional Departments.....	12
III.	EXTRACTS FROM ALLIANCE PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSIONS	13
IV.	ALLIANCE POST-BUDGET PRESS STATEMENTS	20
V.	APPENDIX I – LIST OF ALLIANCE MEMBER ORGANISATIONS.....	22

I. OVERVIEW OF BUDGET 2010

This document aims to give an overview of the Budget and its impact on children. It is split into three sections. The first analyses Budget 2010 and provides commentary on the key issues as identified by the Alliance. The second gives detailed descriptions of the measures introduced by key departments, without providing commentary. The final section includes useful information – including extracts from Alliance pre-Budget submissions, our post Budget press statements, and a list of our member organisations.

Budget 2010 was the most discussed, debated, analysed and awaited Budget in the country's history. Never before has a Budget generated so much anticipation, concern – even fear – across all sectors of society. At home and abroad Budget 2010 was seen as the Government's chance to show that it was capable of leading the country out of recession; and could demonstrate to international partners that Ireland can take steps to reverse its misfortunes and emerge strong. The *McCarthy Report on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure* ('An Bord Snip Nua' report)¹ and the *Commission on Taxation Report*,² both published in summer 2009, advised Government on how to achieve an overall budgetary adjustment of €4 billion. At Cabinet, it was agreed that this year the focus would be on cuts, not taxation.

In total, measures announced in Budget 2010 amounted to €4 billion in savings, made up of over €1 billion from the public sector pay bill, €760 million from social welfare, €980 million from day-to-day spending programmes, and €960 million from investment projects. With these reductions, the Government aims to stabilise the national deficit in a fair way, safeguard those worst hit by the recession, and stimulate the crucial sectors of the economy to sustain and create jobs.

However, though the Minister for Finance, Brian Lenihan T.D., may have aimed high for the country, he was not fair to children. The Child Benefit payment – universal acknowledgement of the cost associated with bringing up children – was cut by €16 per child. Families on low incomes will be compensated using the Qualified Child Increase (QCI) and the Family Income Supplement (FIS), but this fails to recognise existing problems with these payments. Increasing the QCI risks creating a poverty trap. And, while the take up of FIS among low paid workers has increased, it still remains low – meaning that not all children in low income working families will benefit from the top up. Families just above the income threshold for FIS – many of whom have taken significant cuts in pay – get no relief from the reduction in child benefit. The Government, by tinkering with an already flawed system, has missed the opportunity to integrate the tax and welfare systems and enable the introduction of a targeted 'second tier' payment for all families on low incomes, regardless of whether that income comes from welfare or from low paid work.

Raising a child is no cheaper today than it was yesterday. Consumer prices may well be going down, but, the costs associated with children increased in 2009: childcare by 6%, primary and secondary education by 7% and healthcare by 3%.³ For those on medical cards the cost of prescriptions is a new burden; and for lone parent families, the cut in the One Parent Family Payment risks pushing them further into poverty. Put simply, there is no relief for families in Budget 2010. It still costs €60 to take a child to the doctor. In Dublin, childcare still costs €1,000 a month. A basket of healthy food will still cost a family of two adults and two children €141 each week.⁴ The difference is that now there is less money to pay for these things. So who suffers? Children.

Because children do not grow up alone, they are part of families and communities, and their childhoods are affected by the experiences and means of those around them. The headlines emerging from Budget 2010 are the cuts to public sector workers, even for those earning less than €30,000; and the 4.1% cut to all social welfare payments, including those to parents. The Government has missed the point – that each individual cut affects the *same* child. It is the same child whose mother's pay has been reduced, whose Child Benefit has been cut and

1 *The Report of the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes*, Government Publications Sales Office (16 July 2009). The report of the Special Group was published in two volumes and can be accessed at <http://sgps.gov.ie>

2 *Commission on Taxation Report* (2009), Government Publications Sales Office. Available at <http://www.taxcommission.ie/>

3 Central Statistics Office, *Consumer Price Index*, June 2009.

4 Healthy Food for All, *Policy Briefing: the affordability of healthy eating for low income households*, October 2009.

whose asthma prescription medicines now cost €120 per month under the Drug Payment Scheme. It is the same child, living in a lone parent family, whose father's One Parent Family Payment is cut and who is forced to borrow money to help with the cost of Christmas, in the absence of the Christmas bonus.

The greatest cuts to social welfare were targeted at those under 25 years claiming Jobseekers Allowance; but targeting the young for these cuts ignores the fact that this is not a homogenous group. We question how the new rules on Jobseekers Allowance will apply to a young person who has just left care or detention, who does not have a family home to return to, and with a poor school record is struggling to find a job?

We acknowledge that there are some positives in Budget 2010 for children, such as:

- Commitment of €3 million for a constitutional Referendum on the Rights of the Child in 2010
- €15 million allocated to the Ryan Report Implementation Plan
- Capital investment in mental health and in youth justice.

But overall, the Alliance believes that Budget 2010 weighs too heavily on children. The Government had to raise revenue. That is not in question. But it had choices to make in how it did that.⁵ By selecting payments targeted at children for cuts it demonstrated that nothing, not even childhood, is safe from the Government knife.

Transparency in the Budgetary Process

Improvements in the budgetary process are needed to ensure appropriate and accessible information is put into the public domain. In undertaking our analysis, the Alliance was unable to access budgetary information on some of the key issues of concern to us. In some cases, this information was not yet available to departmental officials whose programmes would be directly affected by the budgetary measures. For example, we were unable to locate any reference to the delivery of promised appropriate care to separated children, the development of the new National Paediatric Hospital or ongoing investment in Primary Care. Furthermore, in other cases top-level budget lines are identified with no reference to individual programmes or initiatives, such as child protection in the HSE, accommodation for asylum seekers, and play and recreation facilities.

⁵ The Children's Rights Alliance, as members of the Community and Voluntary Pillar of Social Partnership supported broadening the tax base as a way to raise revenue, starting with the closure of the 111 tax breaks outlined in the Commission on Taxation Report.

II. ANALYSIS OF BUDGET 2010

This section highlights some of the changes arising from Budget 2010 that are of particular importance to children. These issues are split into two sections – those changes that we welcome, and those that disappoint us.

Key Positives of Budget 2010

✓ **€3 million allocated to a Constitutional Referendum on Children's Rights**

The Alliance warmly welcomes the allocation of €3 million for a Constitutional Referendum on Children's Rights in 2010. The Constitution is the fundamental law of the land and until it changes, children will continue to have their rights ignored. The current provisions of our Constitution are blocking reform of our care and adoption systems. Furthermore, constitutional reform could mean all children will be treated equally, and have their right to be heard and their identity respected. A commitment to hold a referendum next year takes us one step closer to realising the rights of children in Ireland.

✓ **€15 million for implementation of Ryan Report recommendations**

The Alliance welcomes the €15 million allocated to the delivery of the Government's Ryan Report *Implementation Plan*.⁶ It was critical that Budget 2010 acknowledge the child abuse scandals that dominated our news in 2009. The publication of the Ryan and Murphy reports were landmark events. We were disappointed that the Minister for Finance did not mention this commitment in his speech. The €15 million allocated is a significant portion of the €25 million – pledged up until 2011 – committed to in summer 2009. It will provide necessary support for survivors of abuse through the allocation of additional resources for counselling and facilitate the recruitment of a minimum of 200 additional social workers for the protection and care of today's children.

✓ **Capital investment in mental health**

Good mental health is the foundation of a happy childhood; yet to date, Ireland's investment in child and adolescent mental health services has been dismal. Budget 2010 indicates that this will change. It highlights mental health as a key area for investment, and commits an initial €43 million to specific projects, including the development of child and adolescent community mental health units. It also guarantees multi-annual funding to mental health, based on the sale of HSE assets. This is an important and welcome commitment.

✓ **Funding for Education commitments in the *Renewed Programme for Government***

Budget 2009 did serious damage to the education sector. The *Renewed Programme for Government* went some way towards reversing the worst of the cuts, by increasing teacher numbers, re-instating the School Book Grant to non-DEIS schools, guaranteeing that the capitation grant for primary schools would be maintained, and reversing decisions relating to certain curricular grants. Budget 2010 allocates funding to support these commitments. These measures demonstrate – as pointed out by the Alliance in our 2009 post-Budget analysis – that the cuts to education were short-sighted, damaging and ill-advised.

✓ **Investment provided for new centre for young offenders**

The Alliance has been calling for the removal of all children under 18 years from St Patrick's Institution for many years. The practice of detaining children with adult offenders in a prison regime is unacceptable. The 19% increase for the Irish Youth Justice Service budget (bringing its total budget to €53 million) is welcome. This increase will support the long overdue construction of a new Children's Detention Centre at the Oberstown Campus in Lusk which will accommodate young offenders under 18 years.

✓ **Continued investment in school buildings**

For the second year running, the desperate state of school buildings has not been ignored in the Budget. Clear commitments to build much needed new schools and restore older ones are welcome. The lower costs in the building sector are an opportunity to be seized. The Government has indicated that it will do that. This year it must plan effectively, to avoid under-spend and the clawing back of this critical budget. The environment in which children spend much of their day must be conducive to learning. The Alliance will continue to monitor progress in this area.

⁶ Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Department of Health and Children (July 2009), *Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, 2009: Implementation Plan*

Key Negatives of Budget 2010

✘ **Cut in the Child Benefit Payment**

The Child Benefit Payment was reduced by €16 for all children, bringing it to €150 for the first and second child (10% reduction), and €187 for the third and subsequent children (8% reduction). Families on low incomes are to be compensated by an increase in the Qualified Child Increase (QCI) for those on social welfare payments, and through the Family Income Supplement (FIS) for those at work on low pay. But the cut fails to recognise the risk of poverty traps associated with the QCI; the low take up rate of FIS, which means that not all children in low income working families will benefit from the top up; or the very serious impact of budget cuts on families just above the thresholds for FIS. Children in working families on low incomes will bear the brunt of this measure.

✘ **Cut to the National Childcare Investment Programme**

Providing quality, affordable, accessible childcare is a key element in achieving the Government's 'Smart Economy', both by providing quality early years education and care for children, and supporting parents to work. The reduction of €2.5 million to the Community Childcare Subvention Scheme (CCSS) demonstrates that providing quality childcare to families on low incomes is not a Government priority. What's more, citing that the new free, pre-school year will compensate for this cut is nonsense. While the pre-school year is a welcome and necessary development, it will provide just one year of early years education and care to children before they attend primary school. It will not accommodate children under three and a half years.

✘ **Cut to the One Parent Family Payment**

The One Parent Family Payment was reduced by 4.1%, from €204 to €196 per week, despite recent EU SILC poverty figures showing that lone parent households have the highest recorded consistent poverty rate among all household types. Nearly one in five of those living in lone parent households (17.8%) were in consistent poverty in 2008; and more than one third (36%) of people in lone parent households were at risk of poverty in the same year. The Government decided to cut all social welfare payments, except pensions. The decision to cut the One Parent Family Payment is a crude choice by Government, which puts children in the most vulnerable families at further risk of poverty.

✘ **Prescription charges**

The introduction of a 50c charge on prescription medicines for medical card holders, with a cap of €10 for families, is disappointing. This move undermines the basic principle of the Medical Card Scheme, which provides free healthcare based on financial need. And there is a further risk: although the initial sum (50 cent) is modest, once legislation to allow co-payment is enacted, this sum could increase steadily over time. If Government want to tackle over-prescription of medicines, they should do this in partnership with medical professionals, not at the expense of the patient. This move signals an end to the Medical Card Scheme as we know it.

✘ **No specific allocation to primary care teams**

Primary Care is the first point of contact that people have with the health system, and it is the appropriate setting for treating 90%-95% of all health and social care needs. For children it is especially important. But Budget 2010 provides no specific additional funding for the roll out of Primary Care teams. Despite a commitment in *Towards 2016* to the roll-out of Primary Care teams, and a €1.5 billion allocation in Budget 2009 to finance the development of 200 new Primary Care Centres, Budget 2010 indicates no follow up on Primary Care. The Alliance is disappointed with the Government's lack of consistency in relation to children's health.

✘ **Alcohol**

Excise duty on alcohol products was reduced in a bid to end cross-border shopping. This move demonstrates the Government's blinkered desire to generate savings – at all costs. Children and adolescents will suffer the effects of this change: binge drinking among teenagers is a serious and ongoing problem, and the impact of family drinking on children is hugely detrimental. We are a society with an endemic alcohol abuse problem: this cut was made on the same day that a report found Irish people to be the second biggest consumers of alcohol in the OECD. A budgetary measure that encourages an increase in alcohol consumption is shameful. The price to public health will far exceed the meagre savings that will be made as a result of this change.

The following section looks at the changes introduced in the three principal departments affecting children: Social Welfare, Education and Health and in the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

It also looks at a variety of measures impacting on children from other Government departments including: Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Office of the Revenue Commissioners, Department of Transport, Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

1. Social Welfare

The 'Social Welfare' Budget will increase by €660 million in 2010, to a total of €21.1 billion. However, this increase is deceptive, as much of it will go towards supporting the increasing numbers of those unemployed. Overall, €760 million of the overall €4 billion in cuts will come from the Department of Social and Family Affairs. These are outlined in detail below.

CUTS

Child Benefit Payment

Taxing and means-testing the Child Benefit payment were both considered in the context of Budget 2010, as tools to make savings and with a view to making the payment more equitable. However, neither was possible for "legal and logistical" reasons.⁷

Child Benefit is a payment paid to almost all parents in Ireland to support them with the costs associated with bringing up a child. In 2008, it was paid to 596,108 families and helped to support 1,141,938 children.

- Budget 2010 cut the lower and higher rates of Child Benefit by €16, reducing it to €150 per month for the first and second child, and to €187 for third and subsequent children.
- Families on low incomes will be compensated for this through increases to the Qualified Child Increase and the Family Income Supplement.

Compensation Measures

- The **Qualified Child Increase (QCI)** supports children that live in families who rely on social welfare as their only income. In 2009, the QCI was paid on behalf of 363,000 children at the full rate (€26) and on behalf of 129,000 children at the half rate (€13). Budget 2010 increased the QCI by €3.80 per week, bringing it to a total of €29.80 per week.
- The **Family Income Supplement (FIS)** is designed to incentivise parents into employment. 29,000 working families claim FIS on behalf of 58,000 children. Budget 2010 increased the weekly income thresholds per child by €6 per week. This is equivalent of just under €4 per child in cash terms.

Overall saving: €123 million (when additional spending on QCI and FIS is accounted for).⁸

⁷ As highlighted by the Children's Rights Alliance is July 2009. See Children's Rights Alliance, Position Paper on the Child Benefit Payment, July 2009, www.childrensrights.ie.

⁸ Total saving through reduction in Child Benefit Payment is €221 million. Cost of compensatory measures through QCI and FIS are €98 million. Total saving is €123 million.

Facts on Child Benefit

Child Benefit

Paid to 596,108 families on behalf of 1,141,938 children (2008)

2009 rate: €166 per month for the 1st and 2nd child

€203 per month for 3rd and subsequent child

2010 rate: Child Benefit will be reduced by €16 per month

€150 per month for the 1st and 2nd child (a cut of €3.68 per week or 10%)

€187 per month for the 3rd and subsequent child (a cut of €3.68 per week or 10%).

Qualified Child Increase

Paid to 492,000 children (full rate = 363,000, half rate = 129,000) (2009)

2009 rate: Paid at €26 per week full rate, €13 per week half rate

2010 rate: Increase full rate to €29.80 (€3.80 increase) and half rate to €14.90 (€1.90 increase) per week to compensate for cut to Child Benefit.

Family Income Supplement

Paid to 29,000 families on behalf of 58,000 children (2008)

2009 rate: 60% weekly tax-free payment calculated at the difference between the recipients' average weekly family income and the income limit for that family size (as per DSFA guidelines).

2010 rate: All Family Income Supplement (FIS) income thresholds will increase by €6 per week per child. This is equivalent of just under €4 per child in cash terms.

Number of Children Affected

Together, QCI and FIS support approximately 550,000 children. This leaves 591,938 children without any additional support from the State beyond the basic child benefit payment.

Savings made to the Exchequer

Overall savings from the cut to Child Benefit are €123 million. The total saving through the cut to Child Benefit Payment is €221 million, however, the cost of compensatory measures through QCI and FIS totals €98 million.

Jobseekers Allowance and Supplementary Welfare Allowance

Jobseekers Allowance is a means-tested payment for people who are unemployed and looking for work. The Supplementary Welfare Allowance is a basic weekly allowance to people who have little or no income.

- For existing claimants, Jobseekers Allowance and the Supplementary Welfare Allowance were reduced by 4.1%, from €204.30 to €196.00. (January 2010).
- The rate of Jobseekers Allowance or Supplementary Welfare Allowance will be reduced to €150 per week where job offers or activation measures have been refused. Details of this measure are not yet available; they will be published in the Social Welfare Bill 2010.

Changes for Under 25s:

- The rate of Jobseekers Allowance or Supplementary Welfare Allowance paid to new claimants aged 20 and 21 years is being reduced from €204 to €100 per week (as was applied to claimants aged 18 and 19 in April 2009). (January 2010).
- The rate of Jobseekers Allowance or Supplementary Welfare Allowance paid to new claimants aged 22, 23 and 24 years is being reduced from €204 to €150 per week. (January 2010)
- The reductions to those under 25 will not apply if recipients
 - participate in approved training or education courses
 - have dependent children

In both of these cases recipients will be paid the full rate of €204.

Saving for new activation measures for claimants under 25: €94m

One-Parent Family Payment

The One-Parent Family Payment is a means-tested payment to support parents who are bringing up children on their own.

- The One-Parent Family Payment was reduced by 4.1%, from €204 per week to €196.00.

Saving: €39.6 million (from reduced rate)⁹

Family Support Agency

The Family Support Agency provides support for families through its network of Family Resource Centres, providing mediation services, counselling and information for families.

- The Family Support Agency Budget was cut by €2 million, to €33.7 million for 2010. Services and staff positions are protected; however, there will be no new Family Resource Centres and no new staff positions in 2010.

Saving: €2 million

Rent Supplement

Rent Supplement provides short-term income support to assist those eligible with private rented accommodation costs.

- The minimum contribution to the Rent Supplement payment remains unchanged.
- Rent limits will be reviewed during 2010, and changes made to reflect reductions in private rent levels. These changes will be outside of the annual budget and will be determined locally, based on local rental costs.

Saving: €20 million

Table 1: FIS increases in income threshold 2009-2010

Family Income Supplement		
Family Size	Income limit 2009	Income limit 2009
1 child	500.00	506.00
2 children	590.00	602.00
3 children	685.00	703.00
4 children	800.00	824.00
5 children	920.00	950.00
6 children	1030.00	1,066.00
7 children	1160.00	1,202.00
8 children or more	1250.00	1,298.00

FIS is calculated at 60% of the difference between net weekly income (i.e. gross pay less Tax, Employee's PRSI, Health Contribution, and Superannuation) and the income limit for your family size.

⁹ However, due to an increase in numbers accessing this payment, an additional €19 million will be allocated to it in 2010, making the total spend on the One Parent Family Payment for 2010 €1.12 billion.

2. Education

The Department of Education and Science was allocated an overall gross budget of €8.888 billion. This is a reduction of €603 million compared with the 2009 figure, and includes a pay-related adjustment of €350 million in line with the Government decision to reduce public service pay rates. Allocation of monies for the year is outlined below:

SPENDING

Additional Teachers

- €12 million is being provided in 2010 for 500 additional teachers over three years, as outlined in the *Renewed Programme for Government*, October 2009. This allocation will allow for the employment of an extra 200 teachers starting in early 2010 and a further 150 teachers starting in September 2010.
- €14 million has been allocated for additional teachers in September 2010 to meet demographic pressures and ensure that there is no increase in the pupil to teacher ratio. This allocation will fund 600 posts in primary schools and 330 posts in secondary schools; and was outlined in the *Renewed Programme for Government*, October 2009.

Cost: €26 million

School Buildings

- €579 was allocated to the School Buildings Programme. That figure includes €72 million from the overall capital figure carried over from 2009 (€79 million in total), so is a new investment of €507 million.

Cost: €579 million

Information Technology

- €50 million has been allocated to support the integration of information and communications technology in teaching and learning in schools. This figure includes €7 million for the overall capital figure carried over from 2009.

Cost: €50 million

Capitation Grants and School Book Costs

Capitation grants are paid per student to each primary school. Capitation grants are used for the day-to-day running of schools and for teaching materials and resources.

- Capitation grants will be maintained at their current levels. Funding of €196.8 million will be provided in total, an increase of 4% on 2009, to take account of increased pupil numbers.
- Extra funding will be allocated to schools for school books and to support curricular activities, as outlined in the *Renewed Programme for Government*, October 2009. Information available as to which grants will be supported and how much will be allocated to each individual measure is not yet available.

Cost: €19 million

National Educational Psychological Service

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) is concerned with learning, behaviour, social and emotional development. NEPS psychologists work in partnership with teachers, parents and children in identifying and meeting educational needs.

- Additional funding of €2.4 million is being provided to the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) to provide for the increase in the number of psychologists to 210 in 2009 and to allow NEPS psychologists to provide a direct service to every primary and second-level school in country; along with an enhanced service in special schools and units.

Educational Disadvantage

- €5 million allocation from the Dormant Accounts Fund will allow for the continuation of existing schemes to counteract educational disadvantage funded from this source.

Irish Language

- €3 million has been allocated for the promotion of the Irish language in schools as part of the new 20 year Strategy for the Irish Language.

School Transport

The School Transport Scheme provides subsidised school transport to pupils that are eligible.¹⁰

- The overall provision for school transport is €188 million, an increase of €10 million on 2009, this includes; provision for new services as necessary.
- Efficiencies made in 2009 will continue to yield savings in 2010.¹¹

CUTS

Teacher Education

- Teacher in-service education support is €29.8 million, compared with a 2009 Budget estimate of €40 million. Services will be focused on priority areas including special educational needs, child protection guidelines training, implementation of new procedures for under-performing teachers and Project Maths.
- Restructuring of existing services in teacher education will continue in 2010.
- The allocation for pre-service teacher education is being reduced by €3 million and will be achieved by reducing the number of post-graduate conversion places.

Allocations to Education Bodies and Agencies

- Funding to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) was reduced by €0.93 million, 20% of its overall budget.
- Funding to the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) was reduced by €2.3 million, 21% of its overall budget.

¹⁰ Note – even when a pupil meets the age and distance criteria for school transport, there is no legal entitlement to transport.

¹¹ Budget 2009 increased the cost of school transport for eligible families. The post-primary fee increased from an annual fee of €168 for junior cycle students and €234 for senior cycle students to a single annual rate of €300 for all eligible children. The maximum payable by a single family, regardless of the number of children using the system, is €650.

3. Health

The overall health Budget for 2010 will be €15.3 billion, comprising €14.8 billion for current spending, and €484 for capital projects. The Budget cut current spending by over €1 billion, of which €659 million was pay-related. Capital spending was cut by €37 million. Only a small amount of the overall health budget will focus on children.

SPENDING

Mental Health

- Provision was announced for a multi-annual investment programme in ‘important’ mental health projects that are in line with the strategy set out in *A Vision for Change*. This investment programme will be capital focused and will be funded from the sale of surplus HSE assets.
- An additional €43 million was allocated to the ‘mental health capital programme’ for 2010. Further funding for mental health will be provided as asset sales allow.
- The mental health capital programme will provide a range of facilities across the entire spectrum of mental healthcare facilities, including child and adolescent units. It is intended to enable the transformation to a patient-centred, flexible and community-based mental health service, where the need for hospitals is greatly reduced.
- It is not yet clear what proportion of the allocation will focus on child and adolescent mental health services.

Medical Cards and Drug Payment Scheme

- An additional €230 million was allocated to the HSE demand-led schemes. These include the Medical Card and the Drug Payment Scheme. This increase will not change the thresholds for access to these payments or their value; its purpose is to cover the predicted cost of new applicants for medical cards, triggered by the increasing number of unemployed people.
- HSE demand-led schemes will have an overall allocation of €3 billion in 2010.

CUTS

Drugs Payment Scheme

The Drug Payment Scheme is designed to ensure that spending by individuals and families on approved prescribed medicines is capped at a certain level.

- The monthly threshold for the Drugs Payment Scheme is being increased from €100 to €120 per month. This means that families will now have to spend €120 on prescribed drugs, rather than €100, before state supports kick-in. The threshold for the Drug Payment Scheme was increased from €90 to €100 in Budget 2009, and so has been increased by 75% over two budgets.

Savings: €27 million in 2010.

Prescription Charges

- A 50 cent charge has been introduced per prescription item for holders of medical cards. A €10 monthly ceiling per family will apply. Previously prescriptions were free to medical card holders.
- New legislation is required to give effect to this co-payment. The expected implementation date is May 2010.

Savings: €15 million in 2010.

4. Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs

The Office for the Minister of Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) was allocated a Budget of €351.2 million for 2010. This is a significant reduction on the 2009 budget of €539 million, mainly due to the abolition of the Early Childcare Supplement, announced in 2009, and now fully in force.

SPENDING

Constitutional Referendum on Children's Rights

- €3 million allocated to finance the holding of a referendum on the Rights of the Child. The Joint Committee on the Constitutional Amendment on Children is scheduled to complete its work on 16 December. The Committee will then submit its final report to the Oireachtas for consideration.

Ryan Report Implementation Plan

- €15 million allocated to fund measures identified in the Government's *Implementation Plan* in response to the recommendations of the Ryan Report.
- This allocation will fund:
 - Counselling survivors of abuse
 - The recruitment of at least 200 social workers by the end of 2010
 - Preparations in relation to independent inspections of foster care services, detention schools and all children's residential centres, including those for children with a disability
 - Development of multi-disciplinary assessment services for children at risk
 - A multi-disciplinary team for children in special care and detention
 - Aftercare services; and
 - Advocacy services for children in care.

CUTS

Childcare

- €2.5 million was cut from the 2010 allocation for the National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP). The NCIP, 2005-2010, a programme of investment in childcare infrastructure has an overall budget of €575 million over five years.
- The €2.5 million savings will come from the Community Childcare Subvention Scheme (CCSS). The CCSS is a support scheme for community childcare services to enable them to charge reduced childcare fees to parents who are disadvantaged or on lower incomes.
- The CCSS is due to end in September 2010 and be replaced by a new scheme. The new scheme is reported to shift the focus in favour of parents in low paid employment or in training and education. Changes to the scheme are as follows:
 - Parents currently participating in a FAS or VEC course receive childcare support up to the value of €133.50 per week. It is proposed, subject to finalising arrangements with relevant Departments, to increase this payment to €170 per week.
 - Currently, parents who are unemployed qualify for the top rate of subvention - €100 per week (Band A). This band will be widened to take in low income working parents who qualify for FIS.
 - Band A parents on Job Seekers Benefit/Assistance will continue to be eligible for the top rate of subvention on a part-time basis (i.e. up to five hours of childcare per day).
 - Low income working parents above the FIS threshold, for example parents holding medical or GP visit cards, will now be classified as Band B, and their current weekly subvention rate will increase from the old rate of €45 to €50 per week.

Youth Work

- There was a 3% overall reduction in funding for the youth sector. This was comprised of a 2% reduction in the Youth Work Grant Scheme and a 9% reduction in the Young People's Facilities Fund.
- Funding of €46.6 million will be provided for the youth sector in 2010.

5. Additional Departments

Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform

- A total of €53 million has been provided for the Irish Youth Justice Service. This is an increase of 19% on the 2009 figure, and will support the construction of a new juvenile detention facility at the Oberstown Campus, Lusk. Co. Dublin.

Office of the Revenue Commissioners

Alcohol

- Excise duty on alcohol products will be reduced by:
 - 12 cent per pint of beer or cider
 - 14 cent per half glass of spirits
 - 60 cent per standard bottle of wine
- This move is cited as a measure to address cross-border shopping, which is having a negative impact on the Irish economy.

Department of Transport

- Funding for the Green Schools provision is being maintained at €2 million. The objective of this programme is to reduce car use for school travel by encouraging children to walk or cycle to school; to date, this programme has achieved a 22% reduction in car use for school travel in participating schools.

Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

Community and Voluntary Sector Supports

- The Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs will continue to provide funding for the Scheme to Support National Organisations in the Community and Voluntary Sector. The Alliance, along with 63 other organisations, is funded through this Scheme.
- The 21 volunteer centres and other volunteer initiatives will also continue to be funded.

Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government

- €1.1 billion allocated to housing measures. The overall housing budget will deliver some 9,000 new housing units for households in need of housing in 2010.
- Need for construction is reduced by a move towards leasing of housing available in the market.
- Support for homeless provision is maintained at €56 million.

III. EXTRACTS FROM ALLIANCE PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSIONS

The following are extracts from the Alliance Pre-Budget Submission to the Department of Social and Family Affairs and to the Department of Finance. Full copies of these submissions are available on our website www.childrensrights.ie

A. Extract from the Alliance Pre-Budget Submission to the Department of Social and Family Affairs

Child Income Support

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantees an adequate standard of living (Article 27) as a basic right for every child, but for many Irish children this right is being denied.

1.1 Child Benefit

The Child Benefit Payment is paid to (almost) every child in Ireland.¹² In difficult economic times, this payment should be maintained at its current level. Under no circumstances should it be taxed, means-tested or reduced in value (further detail on the Alliance position on the Child Benefit Payment is outlined in section three: the medium to long term view).

Budget 2010 should:

- Maintain Child Benefit at its current level of €166 for the 1st and 2nd child, and €203 for 3rd and subsequent children
- Not introduce a tax on child benefit, or opt to means-test it.

Cost: €2.5 billion (estimate based on 2009 figures).¹³

1.2 Qualified Child Increase

The Qualified Child Increase (QCI, also known as the Qualified Child Allowance) is a critical targeted measure for addressing child income poverty. It supports children that live in families who rely on social welfare as their only income, often due to a parent's illness or disability, or full time caring responsibilities.

This year, the QCI must be maintained at its current level of €26 per week. The Government must not cut payments that are targeted at our poorest children.

Budget 2010 should:

- Maintain the Qualified Child Increase at the 2009 level of €26 per week.

Cost: €534 million (estimated based on 2009 figures).¹⁴

1.3 Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance

The cost of education, particularly at the beginning of the school year, can be a serious strain for low income families. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its *Concluding Observations* to Ireland in 2006, voiced its concern about the "de facto" cost of education and materials in schools, which are in many instances the responsibility of parents.¹⁵ The pressure of meeting these costs can disincentivise education for some families.

12 The Child Benefit payment is not paid to those children who do not satisfy the Habitual Residency Condition, this included 2,227 children living in Direct Provision Centres. See point 2.6 in this section for further detail.

13 Department of Social and Family Affairs (2009), *Report to the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure*, p,39

14 Figure received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the Department of Social and Family Affairs, September 2009. NOTE: This figure is an estimate and could be subject to change.

15 United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2006), *Concluding Observations: Ireland*.

The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance (BSCFA) is the key mechanism through which financial assistance is granted towards the cost of school. But despite the welcomed increases in recent years, the BSCFA still does not reflect the actual cost of returning to school. The payment does not cover the cost of clothing and shoes for school – research undertaken in summer 2009 found that uniforms can cost up to €140 for primary school children, and up to €400 for secondary school, not including footwear.¹⁶ Furthermore, the payment does not help with the cost of school books, which cost on average €100 for primary school students and up to €390 for students in secondary school.¹⁷ Add these to the other costs parents face, such as photocopying, school trips, school transport fees and voluntary contributions the final cost of school is far above the current BSCFA of €200 for children between two and 11 years, and €305 for children between age 12 and 17 years.¹⁸

Changes made in Budget 2010 should have a long term focus. Education is a proven route out of poverty; dedicated investment in supporting children from low income families through school will see a return for all. For that reason, the Alliance suggests that the BSCFA is changed to a ‘Cost of School Allowance’, to reflect the real cost of education and to compensate for the abolition of the school book grant last year. The Alliance also recommends that this payment is increased in value.

Budget 2010 should:

- Change the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance to a ‘Cost of School Allowance’ and increase it to €300 per year for children between two and 11 years, and €500 per year for children between 12 and 17 years.¹⁹ This payment should be paid in two instalments, June and January.
- Bring the income limits for the ‘Cost of School Allowance’ in line with those for the Family Income Supplement (FIS)²⁰ and make the income limits the same for one parent and two-parent families.

Cost: €112 million.²¹ This is an increase of €37 million on the 2009 estimated figure (€75 million).

1.4 Family Income Supplement

The Family Income Supplement (FIS) is designed to incentivise parents into employment. However, its take up has been lower than anticipated, and there are administrative barriers and stigma issues associated with it that have proved difficult to overcome. While FIS is not perfect, it does provide income support to about 29,000 working families,²² and advances made to it (and its take up) in recent years are welcome. But there is still some way to go.

Working families are increasingly hit by Budget cuts across departments. Many parents have had their working hours cut and may no longer qualify for FIS under the existing rules,²³ yet payments like FIS – that support parents in low paid work – can make the difference between getting through the week or not. Eligibility for this payment should be flexible enough to reflect the change in the economy: if parents’ hours are cut they should not immediately lose the FIS payment. Accessing payments that incentivise work and that help keep people in work should not be a burden. Instead, FIS should be paid automatically to all eligible families.

16 Barnardos, August 2009. See http://www.barnardos.ie/media_centre/our-latest-news/back-to-school-breaks-the-bank-for-parents-struggling-to-meet-high-costs-of-free-education-barnardos.html [accessed 03/09/09].

17 Barnardos, August 2009. See http://www.barnardos.ie/media_centre/our-latest-news/back-to-school-breaks-the-bank-for-parents-struggling-to-meet-high-costs-of-free-education-barnardos.html [accessed 03/09/09].

18 The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance is also paid at the higher rate for each child aged between 18 and 22 if the parent is entitled to an increase for a qualified child in relation to that child, or if the child is in full time education.

19 This should also apply to young people up to 22 years if the young person qualifies for the payment based on the criteria in footnote 5.

20 FIS claimants are entitled to earn €500 if they have one child, €590 with two children, and €685 with three children and still be eligible for the payment.

21 Figure received by the Children’s Rights Alliance from the Department of Social and Family Affairs, September 2009. NOTE: This figure is an estimate and could be subject to change. €60 million was allocated in Budget 2009 for this payment. At time of writing this figure had been increased to €75 million due to the increase in those claiming the payment. The figure above is based on the latest numbers available to the Department of Social and Family Affairs as of September 2009.

22 Department of Social and Family Affairs (2009), *Report to the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure*, p. 43

23 To qualify for FIS you must be working 19 or more hours per week in employment that is likely to last at least 3 months, looking after a child or children and earning less than a set amount (which varies according to family size – starting at €500 per week for families with one child and rising to €920 a week with five children).

Budget 2010 should:

- Ensure that this payment is flexible enough to reflect changes in working hours as a result of the economic downturn.
- Make the Family Income Supplement (FIS) payment automatic to eligible families and maintain it at its current level.

Cost: €212 million (estimated based on 2009 figures).²⁴

1.5 One Parent Family Payment

The Alliance supports the reform of supports for lone parent families, including efforts to removing employment disincentives and providing access to affordable childcare, training, and education. The primary objective of this system of support must be the elimination of poverty amongst these families. Those living in lone parent households are the group most at risk of poverty when compared with other household types – the 2007 EU SILC figures show that 20% of lone parent families live in consistent poverty, while 38% are at risk of poverty.²⁵ On that basis, existing payments to these households must be maintained, we cannot risk that our poorest family group fall deeper into poverty.

Budget 2010 should:

- Maintain the One Parent Family Payment at its current rate of €204.30 per week

Cost: €1,116 million based on 2009 figures.²⁶

1.6 Child Benefit Payment for Asylum Seeking Children

In 2004, the Irish Government introduced a two-year Habitual Residency Condition for eligibility to the Child Benefit payment. This ended the policy of a universal child benefit payment to all children resident in Ireland. Now, children of asylum seekers and separated children are not entitled to receive Child Benefit. At the end of June 2009 there were 2,227 children living in direct provision centres.²⁷ Making these vulnerable children eligible for Child Benefit would cost just 0.02% of the annual social welfare budget.²⁸ It is important to note that the asylum seeking families are not entitled to work. Hence they have no legitimate means of supplementing the direct provision payment (Adult €19.10/Child €9.60 per week) they receive to provide basic and social necessities for their children.

Budget 2009 should:

- Restore Child Benefit as a universal payment by removing the Habitual Residency Condition.

Cost: This change would cost approximately €4.4 million per annum.²⁹

24 Department of Social and Family Affairs (2009), *Report to the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure*, p. 43.

25 Central Statistics Office, *Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) in Ireland, 2007*.
See <http://www.cso.ie/releasespublications/documents/silc/Current/silc.pdf>.

26 Department of Social and Family Affairs (2009), *Report to the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure*, p. 62.

27 Reception and Integration Agency, *Monthly Statistics Report July 2009*, p. 7 See [http://www.ria.gov.ie/filestore/publications/RIAJuly\(A4\)2009.pdf](http://www.ria.gov.ie/filestore/publications/RIAJuly(A4)2009.pdf)

28 Department of Social and Family Affairs (2009), *Report to the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure*, p. 5.

29 Calculation based on €166 as the monthly rate of payment to all of the 2,227 children.

B. Extract from the Alliance Pre-Budget Submission to the Department of Finance

The current economic situation is no excuse to forget children. Nor is it an excuse to abandon policies that can have a positive impact in the long term. While the Alliance recognises the pressure on the Minister to make quick and smart spending decisions in the short term, it also urges him to consider the long-term impact of choices taken now. This section outlines the Alliance recommendations to Government for the medium to long-term. These are the goals that this and future Budgets should work towards.

Though child poverty did not end in the boom years, much progress was made in reducing the number of children that grow up poor, and breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty in Ireland. This work cannot be undone. Even now, in tough economic times, the Government's key goal must be to end child poverty in Ireland once and for all. Further cuts to services and supports that are vital to those on low incomes or on social welfare risks two things:

- That those who were lifted out of poverty in the boom years will fall back into it.
- That those who did not benefit from the country's economic success will be pushed further still into poverty.

2010 is the European Year against Poverty and Social Exclusion. It is a year dedicated to focusing energies in each of the 27 European countries to addressing the problem of poverty, and child poverty in particular. Much work remains to be done in Ireland to reach our goal of eradicating child poverty. In 2007, over 76,000 children were still living in consistent poverty; and over 206,000 children, or almost 20%, were considered to be at risk of poverty.³⁰ We know that child poverty will not disappear in a year; but with the necessary commitment and resources this problem *can* be solved. We should use the 2010 year to build on progress already made: to protect the supports and services that exist for those on the lowest incomes. Implementing the recommendations made by 'An Bord Snip' would be a dangerous step backwards for those on or near the poverty line who, especially now, need the Government's support most.

We urge the Minister not to make this Budget a step backwards for children. Below, we outline what the Government should do to demonstrate that it remains focused on its commitment to ensure that no child in Ireland grows up in poverty.³¹

2.1 Child Benefit

The Child Benefit payment is a non-stigmatising, regular and valued payment, wholly focused on children. Taxing or means-testing Child Benefit undermines the principles of universalism, horizontal distribution and recognition of the extra costs associated with having children. Such a move would generate huge administrative costs, and risks triggering mass political discontent.³²

The Alliance believes that to tax or means-test Child Benefit would demonstrate a failure by Government to recognise its unique value to children and families. The Child Benefit payment is a clear statement that the Irish State values all children in Ireland equally. Taxing or means-testing this payment would demonstrate that it does not. Particularly now, in difficult and uncertain economic times, a regular, reliable payment to families is of critical importance. The Alliance is firmly opposed to any changes in the Child Benefit payment for the reasons outlined below:

1. **Horizontal equity:** Child Benefit is a payment that reflects our values as a society. It is based on the principle of horizontal equity: income is distributed from those without children to those with children. Taxing or means-testing the payment undermines this principle.
2. **Child Benefit is children's money:** This is recognised by the Irish Supreme Court.

30 Central Statistics Office, *European Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC) in Ireland 2007*. See <http://www.cso.ie/releasespublications/documents/silc/Current/silc.pdf>.

31 *The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016* states that the Government's aim is to reduce the number of those experiencing consistent poverty to between 2% and 4% by 2012, with the aim of eliminating consistent poverty by 2016 (p.13).

32 For further information on the Alliance position on the Child Benefit payment and an analysis of the UK situation, see the *Alliance Briefing note on the Child Benefit Payment*, July 2009 at www.childrenrights.ie

3. **Associated administrative costs:** Taxing or means-testing Child Benefit would be a costly administrative exercise as it would require the policing of family and tax status of those in receipt of the payment, and could generate more costs than savings.
4. **Potential political fallout:** Taxing or means-testing Child Benefit would be deeply and politically unpopular, as it would suggest that Government does not value parents' role in raising their children.

The Alliance urges caution in any decision relating to the Child Benefit payment. Any immediate action must also prove to be the best use of resources in the medium to long term. A move to taxing or means-testing the Child Benefit payment risks costing far more in administrative and staffing costs than it would generate in savings.³³ We urge the Government to consider this with care. It would be a grave error to take a decision on principle that, when implemented, proved impractical and costly.

Budget 2010 should:

- **Not cut, tax or means test the Child Benefit Payment**

2.2 Second Tier Payment

However, the Alliance acknowledges that Child Benefit alone cannot cover all of the costs associated with raising and caring for a child, and it alone cannot shield a child from poverty. For children living in the poorest families additional support is required. This is where our social welfare system is weak. It does not have an effective mechanism to channel money to where it is needed most; and it is not set up to identify and support families that are surviving below a certain income.

This must change. The principle of progressive universalism – support for all children, and additional support for those that need it most – should govern decisions in this area. A second tier payment, something the Alliance has long advocated for, reflects this principle; and it meets the Government's requirements on the grounds of equity and efficiency. The second tier payment is a single payment targeted at families with income below a certain level, regardless of whether they are on welfare or in low-paid work.

The Alliance believes that implementation of the second tier payment is a vital step towards ending child poverty in Ireland. A long-term approach to ending child poverty cannot be abandoned in a recession. Now more than ever, the Government should be seeking the most effective use of its limited resources. It must remain focused on its key goals, which include eradicating child poverty³⁴ and providing an adequate standard of living to all children in Ireland.³⁵

Much of the preparatory work for this type of payment has been done. The nature of the payment and its likely cost are clear.³⁶ Primarily, the second tier payment should have the following principles at its core:

- It should be paid to **all families below a certain income** level – it must allow recipients move between welfare and work
- Its single objective must be to **target support** at low-income families with children
- It must be **adequate in value** to genuinely tackle child poverty
- It must **treat all families** on the same level of income **equally**
- It must be **paid automatically** to ensure that take up and stigma are not barriers
- It must be large enough to ensure that **those already on FIS do not lose out**
- It must have a withdrawal rate that **reduces potential poverty traps**

33 Callan, T. Et al (2006), *Child Poverty and Income Supports: Ireland in a Comparative Perspective*, ESRI Budget Perspectives 2007; and National Economic and Social Council (2007), *Ireland's Child Income Supports: The Case for a New Form of Targeting*. Research Series, paper no.6 both acknowledge that taxing child benefit would require system change, which would have significant cost implications and would take time.

34 *The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016* states that the Government's aim is to reduce the number of those experiencing consistent poverty to between 2% and 4% by 2012, with the aim of eliminating consistent poverty by 2016 (p.13).

35 Article 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every child's right to an adequate standard of living is recognised. *Towards 2016: Ten Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement (2006-2015)* states its long-term goal that "Every child should grow up in a family with access to sufficient resources, supports and services to nurture and care for the child....."

36 NESI and the ESRI have both undertaken studies of this type of payment: its cost, design and implementation. See: Callan, T. Et al (2006), *Child Poverty and Income Supports: Ireland in a Comparative Perspective*, ESRI Budget Perspectives 2007; and National Economic and Social Council (2007), *Ireland's Child Income Supports: The Case for a New Form of Targeting*. Research Series, paper no.6 pp. 68-70

Introducing a second tier payment would demonstrate that the Government is committed to ending child poverty, even in difficult economic circumstances. The commitment, made in the Supplementary Budget (April 2009), to one year free pre-school for every child, showed that the Government can make progressive decisions in recessionary times. We urge them to do the same for the second tier payment. 76,000 children living in poverty are depending on them.

Budget 2010 should:

- Commit to the introduction of a **targeted payment to all children in low-income families**, regardless of whether parents are on welfare or in low-paid work.
- Develop a **timescale** for implementation of the payment, with a deadline of 2014.

2.3 Education

Impact on the 2009 cuts to education

Education was decimated in Budget 2009. So much so that it is impossible to imagine what could be left to cut.³⁷ Education is a proven route out of poverty – it can change the life chances of a generation – and its ability to deliver for children cannot be further weakened. Investing in education not only improves children’s potential, but also benefits society in the long-run through a more skilled workforce, lower unemployment and higher wages for workers. Further cuts would be a grave error and would demonstrate dangerous short-term thinking by Government.

The Alliance strongly urges Government to reverse the cuts made to education in Budget 2009, and, given the critical importance of child literacy, we call for the school book grant for poor pupils in non-DEIS schools to be reinstated with urgency.

Budget 2010 should:

- Make **no further cuts to education**, this critical service for children has already been seriously hit.
- **Re-instate the school book grant** for poor pupils in non-DEIS schools.

Cost of Education

The cost of education, particularly at the beginning of the school year, can be a serious strain for low income families. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its *Concluding Observations* to Ireland in 2006, voiced its concern about the “de facto” cost of education and materials in schools, which are in many instances the responsibility of parents.³⁸ The pressure of meeting these costs can disincentivise education for some families.

The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance (BSCFA) is the key mechanism through which financial assistance is granted towards the cost of school. But despite the welcomed increases in recent years, the BSCFA still does not reflect the actual cost of returning to school. The payment does not cover the cost of clothing and shoes for school – research undertaken in summer 2009 found that uniforms can cost up to €140 for primary school children, and up to €400 for secondary school, not including footwear.³⁹ Furthermore, the payment does not help with the cost of school books, which cost on average €100 for primary school students and up to €390 for students in secondary school.⁴⁰ Add these to the other costs parents face, such as photocopying, school trips, school transport fees and voluntary contributions the final cost of school is far above the current BSCFA of €200 for children between two and 11 years, and €305 for children between age 12 and 17 years.⁴¹

37 See Appendix One for a selection of the cuts made to education in 2009 and their impact on children.

38 United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2006), *Concluding Observations: Ireland*.

39 Barnardos, August 2009. See http://www.barnardos.ie/media_centre/our-latest-news/back-to-school-breaks-the-bank-for-parents-struggling-to-meet-high-costs-of-free-education-barnardos.html [accessed 03/09/09].

40 Barnardos, August 2009. See http://www.barnardos.ie/media_centre/our-latest-news/back-to-school-breaks-the-bank-for-parents-struggling-to-meet-high-costs-of-free-education-barnardos.html [accessed 03/09/09].

41 The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance is also paid at the higher rate for each child aged between 18 and 22 if the parent is entitled to an increase for a qualified child in relation to that child, or if the child is in full time education.

Changes made in Budget 2010 should have a long term focus. Education is a proven route out of poverty; dedicated investment in supporting children from low income families through school will see a return for all. For that reason, the Alliance suggests that the BSCFA is changed to a 'Cost of School Allowance', to reflect the real cost of education and to compensate for the abolition of the school book grant last year. The Alliance also recommends that this payment is increased in value.

Budget 2010 should:

- Replace the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance with a '**Cost of School Allowance**' and increase it to €300 per year for children between 2 and 11 years, and €500 per year for children between 12 and 17 years.⁴² This payment should be paid in two instalments, June and January.
- Bring the income limits for the 'Cost of School Allowance' in line with those for the Family Income Supplement (FIS)⁴³ and make the income limits the same for one parent and two-parent families.

2.4 Recommendations of the 'Ryan Report'

On 20 May 2009, the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse published the report of its findings (the 'Ryan Report'). The report is the most comprehensive of its kind in Ireland, examining a horrific legacy of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse suffered by over 30,000 children from the years 1936 to 2000.

The 'Implementation Plan' from Government – in response to the recommendations made by Mr. Justice Ryan – contains 99 actions and has a budget of €25 million.⁴⁴ The plan sets out a clear framework that has the potential to make a positive difference to the lives of children in care and in need of protection in Ireland. But to do so it must have sufficient funding, resources and political will. Of particular note are the Plan's actions to:

- Place a legal duty to comply with the Children First guidelines, on staff employed by the State and agencies in receipt of Exchequer funding.
- Increase capacity within the social work service, including the recruitment of 270 social workers, with the objective of ensuring every child in care has an allocated social worker.
- End the practice of placing separated children in hostels (outside regulation/inspection system).
- Commence inspections by the Social Services Inspectorate (under HIQA) of all children's residential centres and foster care homes, including residential and respite services for children with a disability.
- Ensure the provision of aftercare services for children leaving care in all instances where the allocated social worker deems it to be necessary.
- Put in place a national out-of-hours social work crisis intervention service, beginning with a pilot in two areas.

The Government has clearly committed to deliver on the Implementation Plan: "The damage caused by a culture that tolerated and even encouraged physical, sexual and emotional abuse for decades will not be undone by words alone. It is by implementing this Action Plan that we will win back the trust of those whom we abandoned."⁴⁵

Budget 2010 must confirm that this commitment will be honoured. Our economic circumstances cannot be an excuse for delay. We owe it to the children of the past, and all future generations of children in Ireland to make the necessary changes to follow through on these commitments.

Budget 2010 should:

- Move forward without delay on the commitments that have been made by Government to spend €25 million on the implementation of the 99 recommendations of the *Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, 2009, Implementation Plan*.

42 This should also be paid to young people up to age 22 years if the parent is entitled to an increase for a qualified child in relation to that child, or if the child is in full time education.

43 FIS claimants are entitled to earn €500 if they have one child, €590 with two children, and €685 with three children and still be eligible for the payment.

44 Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (2009), *Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, 2009, Implementation Plan*.

45 Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs [Press Release], 'Minister Andrews launches Government's Implementation Plan in response to the Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, 2009', 28 July 2009, located at <http://www.omc.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?DocID=1174>

IV. ALLIANCE POST-BUDGET PRESS STATEMENTS

Wednesday 9 December 2009: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BUDGET WEIGHS HEAVILY ON CHILDREN

“The Minister for Finance said that ‘the worst is over’, but the reality of Budget 2010 for children and families is that there will be no respite from scrimping and saving, to make ends meet. The Minister for Finance spoke of having to make ‘very difficult choices’, yet there can be no more difficult a choice than that now forced upon parents today – with a 10% drop in child benefit and the introduction of 50c prescription charges, among other costs – to choose whether they heat their house, put food on the table or buy medicine. Moreover, young unemployed people have had their job seekers’ allowance slashed – again the young are being asked to pay a higher price. Young families who nurture the future of this country have been left adrift.

“Today’s Budget, and its cuts, will be an accumulative weight on children, young people and their families, from which they – and our society – may take years to recover. The Minister’s speech rightly focused on responding to 2009 issues: the credit crunch, floods, the environment, cross-border shopping and Ted Kennedy. But the Minister’s speech failed to acknowledge the major child abuse scandals that have touched every household in the country and is having international repercussions around the world. Where is the Government’s financial commitment to our child protection and care systems, in response to the Ryan and Murphy reports?

“Tomorrow, the Alliance will issue a comprehensive analysis* of the Budget’s impact on children – essential reading for any politician interested in the welfare and rights of children. This analysis will include a thorough examination of the Budget’s ‘small print’, and incorporate all measures announced in supplementary departmental budgets (to be released this evening) affecting the lives of children. Our analysis will clearly demonstrate the impossible burden placed on children and their families within the departments of social welfare, education, health and elsewhere.

“Budget 2010 was the Government’s opportunity to show that they are serious about investing in children and upholding the rights of children. The only glimmer of hope is the commitment to the closer integration of the tax and social welfare systems, which is necessary for identifying those most in need.

“This Budget will prove itself to be a dead weight that will drag more and more families into darkness and despair, depriving our country of a brighter future that we so desperately need. Today’s Budget is not in the best interests of the child, it is therefore not in the best interests of the country.”

Jillian van Turnhout
Chief Executive

Notes to Editor:

- Child Benefit is paid to 596,108 families on behalf of 1,141,938 children (2008)
- 2006 research found that over 60,000 households with children would fall into poverty if weekly income was reduced by 10%, and over 30,000 households with children would fall into poverty if their weekly income was reduced by up to €5. (Combat Poverty Research Seminar Series, ‘Living around the poverty line’ January 2009)
- Our pre-budget submission is on our website at www.childrensrights.ie

ALLIANCE WELCOMES COMMITMENT TO HOLD CHILDREN’S RIGHTS REFERENDUM AND TO ACT ON RYAN REPORT

“The Children’s Rights Alliance warmly welcomes this evening’s announcement by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Barry Andrews TD, of the Government’s commitment to earmark ‘€3 million to finance the holding of a referendum on the rights of the child’ in 2010. The Constitution is the fundamental law of the land and until it changes, children will continue to have their rights ignored. A commitment to hold a referendum next year takes us one step closer to realising the rights of children in Ireland.

“2009 will be remembered as the year of the Ryan and Murphy reports: the personal stories we heard on our radios, our televisions and indeed in our families’ histories that are now etched in Ireland’s conscience. We also welcome the €15 million allocated to the delivery of the Government’s Ryan Report *Implementation Plan*. This is a significant portion of the €25 million – pledged up until 2011 – committed to in summer 2009. This provision will support survivors of abuse through the allocation of additional resources for counselling and facilitate the recruitment of a minimum of 200 additional social workers for the protection and care of today’s children.

“The Joint Committee on the Constitutional Amendment on Children, following two years of work, is due to issue its final report to the Oireachtas on 16 December. These commitments indicate welcomed political leadership. Given the weakened public confidence in our child protection and care systems following the Ryan and Murphy reports, we believe that changing the Constitution is not only needed to uphold children’s rights but will also be a living memorial to atone for the abuses of the past.”

Jillian van Turnhout
Chief Executive

V. APPENDIX I – LIST OF ALLIANCE MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

Alcohol Action Ireland	Irish Girl Guides
Amnesty International	Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed
Ana Liffey Children's Project	Irish National Teachers Organisation
The Ark, <i>a cultural centre for children</i>	Irish Penal Reform Trust
Assoc. for Criminal Justice Research & Development	Irish Refugee Council
Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland	Irish Traveller Movement
ATD Fourth World	Irish Youth Foundation
Barnardos	Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC)
Barretstown	Jack & Jill Children's Foundation
Belongto	Jesuit Centre for Faith & Justice
Border Counties Childcare Network	Junglebox FDYS
CARI	Kids' Own Publishing Partnership
Catholic Guides of Ireland	Kilbarrack Youth Project
Catholic Youth Care	La Leche League of Ireland
Childminding Ireland	Lifestart National Office
Children in Hospital Ireland	Mary Immaculate College
City of Dublin YMCA	Matt Talbot Community Trust
CityArts	Miss Carr's Children's Home
COPE Galway	Mothers' Union
Crosscare Aftercare Unit	Mounttown Neighbourhood Youth Project
Crosscare Drug & Alcohol Awareness Programme	National Association for Parent Support
DIT –School of Social Sciences & Legal Studies	National Children's Nurseries Association
Down Syndrome Ireland	National Parents Council (Post-Primary)
Dublin Rape Crisis Centre	National Parents Council (Primary)
Dun Laoghaire Refugee Project	National Youth Council of Ireland
Educate Together	National Organisation for the Treatment of Abusers (NOTA)
Education Department UCD	OPEN
Enable Ireland	One Family
Focus Ireland	One in Four
Forbairt Naíonraí Teo	Parentline
Foróige	Pavee Point
Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN)	Peter McVerry Trust
Headstrong	PLANET
Home Start National Office Ireland	Psychological Society of Ireland
Irish Assoc. of Young People in Care (IAYPIC)	Saoirse Housing Association
Irish Secondary Student's Union (ISSU)	SAOL Project – SAOL Beag Children's Centre
Inclusion Ireland	Society of St. Vincent de Paul
Inspire Ireland Foundation Ltd	SPARK (Support Project for Adolescent Refugee Kids)
Integrating Ireland	Spunout.ie
International Adoption Association	St. Nicholas Montessori College
IPPA, the Early Childhood Organisation	St. Nicholas Montessori Society
Irish Autism Action	Step by Step Child & Family Project
Irish Association of Hospital Play Staff	Sugradh
Irish Association of Social Care Workers	Teen Counselling
Irish Association of Social Workers	Treoir
Irish Association of Suicidology	UNICEF Ireland
Irish Centre for Human Rights, NUIG	YAP (Youth Advocate Programme) Ireland
Irish Congress of Trade Unions	Youth Initiative in Partnership
Irish Council for Civil Liberties	Youth Work Ireland
Irish Foster Care Association	



The Children's Rights Alliance is a coalition of over 90 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working to secure the rights and needs of children in Ireland, by campaigning for the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It aims to improve the lives of all children under 18, through securing the necessary changes in Ireland's laws, policies and services.

Children's Rights Alliance

4 Upper Mount Street
Dublin 2

Tel: +353.1.662 9400

Fax: +353.1.662 9355

Email: info@childrensrights.ie

Web: www.childrensrights.ie