children's RIGHTS ALLIANCE

Analysis of Budget 2011 And its Impact on Children

December 2010

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

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This is an in-house publication.

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

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I. OVERVIEW OF BUDGET 2011

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 2011 and provides commentary on the key issues as identified by the Children's Rights 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 the Alliance pre-Budget submission, our post Budget press statement, and a list of our member organisations.

Figures dominated the news in the months running up to Budget 2011. Never before have the national finances been subject to such scrutiny, from external bodies, called upon to 'rescue' the Irish economy; and from citizens keen to understand the causes of our economic woes and engage in debate about solutions. By the time it was announced on 7 December 2010, Budget 2011 held few surprises. The *National Recovery Plan 2011-2014,* published on 24 November, had already outlined plans to save €15 billion by 2014. The *Memorandum of Understanding* between the European Union (EU),[1] the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Irish Government, published on December 1, set out the nature of financial assistance being granted to the State and the conditions to be met for funds to be released.

After months of speculation, the scale of the problem and the nature of the solution were clear: Ireland needs €85 billion to stabilise the economy. Of this, the State will contribute €17.5 billion, drawn from the National Pension Reserve Fund; while external sources (a mix of the EU, the IMF and bi-lateral loans from the UK, Sweden and Denmark) will provide the additional €67.5 billion. Of the grand total, €35 billion is ear-marked to support the banking system (€10 billion for the immediate recapitalisation and up to €25 billion on a contingency basis); the remaining €50 billion will cover the day-to-day financing of the State.

The *National Recovery Plan 2011-2014*, and Budget 2011 as its first step, aims to remove barriers to growth, boost national competitiveness and restore order to the public finances.[2] It does not list protecting children or supporting families among its goals. Instead, it outlines planned spending cuts over four years, which should – if external conditions oblige – reduce the deficit to 3%, from 11.7% in 2010.[3] Savings of €15 billion – €10 billion in spending cuts and €5 billion in tax and revenue raising – are sought; with an initial €6 billion frontloaded in Budget 2011.

Such measures cannot be without pain, and pain is what families will feel following Budget 2011. The combination of tax raising and expenditure cutting measures announced will hit families with children hard, the poorest among them taking the sharpest blow. The Child Benefit Payment – universal acknowledgement of the cost associated with bringing up children – was cut by €10 for all children and €20 for the third child. Startlingly, no compensatory measure was introduced for families on the lowest incomes, though this is easily done through the Qualified Child Increase (QCI) and the Family Income Supplement (FIS). Instead, the Government opted to treat a family on an annual social welfare income of €19,000 the same as a family with earnings of €125,000, and by doing so left 541,000 children worse off. This is deeply unjust. Families on social welfare face a radical reduction in their income: the €10 cut to Child Benefit; a 4.1%, or €8, cut in weekly social welfare rates to unemployed parents and lone parents receiving the One Parent Family Payment; a €2 increase on the Rent Supplement Payment; and an increase in the cost of fuel and water will see their standard of living plummet. For families on low incomes it is little better. The harsh cut to the minimum wage, the introduction of a Universal Social Charge applied to all income over €4,004 and the widening of tax bands and reduction in personal tax credits risk making work little more attractive than welfare for many. What Government failed to understand is that for these families, there are no savings left to make, they have already pulled their belts as tight as they can.

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1 The money provided to Ireland on behalf of the Member States of the EU is administered through the European Financial Stability Fund (EFSF) and the European Financial Stability Mechanism (EFSM). Bilateral loans were provided by Denmark, the UK and Sweden.

2 Government of Ireland (2010) *The National Recovery Plan 2011-2014*, Dublin: Stationery Office, p. 9.

3 Measures taken in Budget 2011 should reduce the deficit to 9.1% in 2011.

The choice Government made in Budget 2011 is clear: more children will grow up in poverty and this generation will have poorer life chances than the one before. The recession is already affecting children's lives; consistent poverty among children grew from 6.3% in 2008 to 8.7% in 2009 – that is one in every eleven children in Ireland living in poverty – and children remain the group most vulnerable to poverty. These 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. But Budget 2011 makes no concessions: across the board it leaves children, families and communities worse off and with little sense of hope.

We acknowledge that there are some positives in Budget 2011 for children, such as:

- Commitment of €3 million for a Constitutional Referendum on children's rights in 2011
- €9 million allocated to delivery of the Ryan Report *Implementation Plan*
- Investment maintained the Universal Pre-School Year

However, these small gestures will provide little solace to the family struggling to pay for Christmas and wondering how on earth they will keep their house warm, their children fed and themselves well in 2011. By deciding to hit those worst off with its cuts, Government has proved that its primary concern is with economic growth and competitiveness, not protecting the youngest and most vulnerable in Irish society.

II. ANALYSIS OF BUDGET 2011

This section highlights some of the changes arising from Budget 2011 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 2011

✓ **Constitutional Referendum on Children's Rights**

The Alliance warmly welcomes the allocation of €3 million for the holding of a Constitutional Referendum on Children's Rights in 2011. 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. The Joint Committee on the Constitutional Amendment on Children agreed this year that a constitutional Referendum is required to strengthen children's rights. This must happen in 2011 if children's rights in Ireland are to be made real.

✓ **Ryan Report Implementation Plan**

The Alliance welcomes the €9 million allocated to the delivery of the Government's Ryan Report *Implementation Plan*.[4] Our child welfare and protection systems must be radically improved and the *Implementation Plan* is the blueprint through which this can be achieved. In 2011, this money will ensure the delivery of 270 social work posts, which in turn will guarantee every child in care an allocated social worker and a care plan.

✓ **Funding for Universal Free Pre-School Year Maintained**

From January 2010 the Government provided one year free pre-school to every child for up to three hours a day, in the year prior to commencing primary school. This was a progressive policy shift, and was widely welcomed.[5] High quality Early Childhood Care and Education delivers long-term dividends to children, families and society;[6] money invested early has consistently been shown to reap both economic and social benefits in the longer term.[7] Maintaining investment in the free pre-school year and building on it in future years is a smart policy decision. We commend the Government for protecting this vital service for children in Budget 2011.

✓ **Mental Health**

Good mental health is the foundation of a happy childhood; yet child and adolescent mental health has been traditionally neglected in favour of physical health services. Budget 2011 commits €15 million to priority mental health projects. Though this figure is far less than is needed, its symbolism is welcome: we must see mental health as a central and critical arm of our health service, not an optional extra.

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4 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*

5 Money for the ECCE year was provided from savings made on abolishing the Early Childcare Supplement in 2009, €170 million was spent on the year from the overall savings of €480 million.

6 J. Heckman, and D. Masterov (2007) *The Productivity Argument for Investing in Young Children*, Discussion Paper Number 2725, Germany: Institute for the Study of Labor. See also, Start Strong (2009) *Why Early Care and Education?* Available at www.startstrong.ie

7 A cost-benefit analysis in 2005 showed that for every €1 invested in ECCE in Ireland, a return of up to €7.10 could be expected National Economic and Social Forum (2005) *Report no. 31: Early Childhood Care and Education*, Dublin: National Economic and Social Forum Annex 5.1, p. 143.

Key Negatives of Budget 2011

- ✗ **Child Benefit Payment Cut**

The Child Benefit Payment was reduced by €10 for all children and by an additional €10 for the third child, bringing it to €140 for the first and second child, €167 for the third child and €177 for fourth and subsequent children. Families in receipt of social welfare payments or those at work on low incomes and in receipt of the Family Income Supplement (FIS) will receive no compensation for this harsh cut, affecting 541,000 children. To have protected these families from this cut would have cost just €56.5 million. Instead the Government opted for a blunt cut to Child Benefit, which treats families on the highest incomes the same as those on the very lowest. This is deeply unjust and must be reversed.

- ✗ **Education Cuts Targeted at Most Disadvantaged**

The *National Recovery Plan 2011-2014* promised to protect education. This was little more than window dressing. In one fell-swoop, Budget 2011 targeted a plethora of education measures designed to support the most disadvantaged: school transport costs were increased for parents, capitation grants were reduced by 5% for schools, resource teachers for Traveller pupils were cut, language support teachers will be withdrawn on a phased basis, caps were placed on the number of educational psychologists and special needs assistants, DEIS rural school coordinators were abolished. The choice was made: cut services to those who need them most.

- ✗ **Adult Social Welfare Rates**

Weekly adult social welfare rates were cut by 4.1%, or €8 per week. This affects the 486,000 children living in households where a parent is reliant on a social welfare payment – Jobseekers Benefit, the One Parent Family Payment or the Disability Allowance – as their primary income. In 2009, 46.2% of people were at risk of poverty before social transfers, once social transfers (such as welfare payments and Child Benefit) were counted this fell to 14.1%. The changes to adult social welfare rates will dramatically affect this figure. These families are already the very poorest in society. They should not be further penalised.

- ✗ **Cumulative Cuts Affecting Families**

All low income families were negatively affected by Budget 2011. The minimum wage was reduced by €1 to €7.65 per hour. A Universal Social Charge – combining the health and income levies – was applied to all income over €4,004. Tax bands were widened and tax credits reduced, bringing more people into the tax net. Child Benefit was cut. Government failed to realise the strain families already face. The choices it made risk plunging more families into poverty and radically increasing stress levels among parents and children alike.

- ✗ **24% Cut to Youth Justice Budget**

It is not clear how this 24% cut will impact on youth justice. The Alliance has been calling for the removal of all children under 18 years from St. Patricks Institution for many years. The practice of detaining children with adult offenders in a prison regime is unacceptable. Last year we welcomed a 19% investment in youth justice, understanding that it would lead to delivery of the long overdue construction of a new Children's Detention Centre in Oberstown Campus in Lusk. We welcome Minister for Justice and Law Reform's commitment that the development of this Centre will continue as one of the Department's key projects and urge that budget cuts do not impact on this critical development.

- ✗ **Alcohol**

There was no change to the price of alcohol in the Budget, despite consistent evidence that low-cost alcohol affects underage and heavy drinkers most. Ireland has the second highest rate of alcohol consumption in the EU.[8] Binge drinking among teenagers is a serious and ongoing problem, and the impact of family drinking on children is hugely detrimental. In Ireland, between 61,000 and 104,000 children aged under 15 are estimated to be living with parents who misuse alcohol.[9] One in every six cases of child abuse in Ireland is attributed to alcohol.[10] 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.

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8 Department for Health and Children (2004) *Strategic Taskforce on Alcohol: Second Report*, Dublin: Stationery Office, p. 6.
9 Jennifer Hough, *The Irish Examiner*, 'Up to 104,000 children living with parents with alcohol problems', 29 October 2010.
10 Speech given by Dr. Tony Holohan, Chief Medical Officer at the 2010 Alcohol Action Ireland Conference Dublin 15 September 2010.

The following section looks at the changes introduced in the three principal departments affecting children: Social Protection; Education and Skill; and Health and Children; 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: the Department of Justice and Law Reform; the Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism; the Department of Transport; the Department of Finance; the Office of the Revenue Commissioners; the Department of Community Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs and the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

1. Social Protection

The 'Social Protection' budget will reduce by €873 million in 2011, to a total of €20.62 billion. The Social Protection budget makes up 38% of all Government current spending. Cuts and spending that will affect children are outlined in detail below.

CUTS

Child Benefit Payment

A Value for Money Review of Child Income Supports was published by the Department of Social Protection in advance of the Budget.[11] It recommended a policy shift towards an Integrated Child Income Support payment. This was not acted upon in Budget 2011.

The universal Child Benefit payment is paid to almost all parents in Ireland to support them with the costs associated with bringing up a child. Currently, 585,000 families received the payment on behalf of 1.11 million children.[12]

- Budget 2011 reduced Child Benefit by €10 for all children; and by an additional €10 (€20 in total) for third children (January 2011).
- There were no compensatory measures for families on low incomes. The Qualified Child Increase and the Family Income Supplement were unchanged.[13]

Saving: €149.38 million.

Adult Social Welfare Rates

Jobseekers Allowance is a means-tested payment for people who are unemployed and looking for work. Jobseekers Benefit is paid to people who are out of work and covered by social insurance (PRSI). The One-Parent Family Payment is a means-tested payment to support parents who are bringing up children on their own. The Supplementary Welfare Allowance is a basic weekly allowance to people who have little or no income.

- Budget 2011 reduces the weekly personal social welfare rates for all of the main social welfare payments for people under 66 years by €8 (an average of 4.1%). This includes Jobseekers Benefit, Jobseekers Allowance, the One Parent Family Payment, Carer's Allowance, Widow's Pension and Disability Allowance (January 2011).
- The main adult social welfare rate for the payments listed above will be €188 per week in 2011, down from €196 in 2010.
- The Supplementary Welfare Allowance will be paid at €186 per week in 2011, down from €196 in 2010.
- The rate of Jobseekers Allowance and Supplementary Welfare Allowance paid to recipients aged 22, 23 and 24 years is being reduced to €144 per week, reduced from €150 in 2010.
- The rate of Jobseekers Allowance and Supplementary Welfare Allowance paid to recipients aged 18-21 will remain unchanged at €100 inclusive per week.

Saving: €397 million.[14]

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11 Department of Social Protection (2010) *A Policy and Value for Money Review of Child Income Support and Associated Spending Programmes*, see www.welfare.ie.

12 Latest figures from the Department of Social Protection see 'Minister Éamon Ó Cuív - Older people fully protected in 2011 Social Protection Budget' [Press Release] 7 December 2010. .

13 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). The Family Income Supplement (FIS) is designed to incentivise parents into employment. In 2009, 25,963 working families claimed FIS on behalf of 55,716 children.

14 The Department of Social Protection will take on the Community Employment Scheme in 2011 and took on the Rural Social Scheme in 2010. The saving reflects that. These schemes have an impact to the value of €13.5 million.

Rent Supplement

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

- Budget 2011 announced an additional €2 per week contribution by certain welfare recipients towards the cost of rent (January 2011).
- The reform of the Rent Supplement Payment was announced in Budget 2011; this will involve discussions with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government with a view to more closely aligning the minimum contribution payable by households with that paid by the equivalent households under the local authority rent scheme. It is also expected that efficiencies arising from the transfer of the Community Welfare Service staff to the Department of Social Protection will allow for improved and more targeted resources to control activities and generate savings.

Saving: €8.4 million will be saved from the €2 increase in payment.

Facts on Child Benefit

Child Benefit

Paid to 602,932 families on behalf of 1,156,917 children (2009)

2010 rate: €150 per month for the first and second child (a cut of €3.68 per week or 10% on 2009)
€187 per month for the third and subsequent child (a cut of €3.68 per week or 10% on 2009).

2011 rate: €140 per month for the first and second child (€10 monthly cut)
€167 per month for the third child (€20 monthly cut)
€177 per month for the fourth and subsequent children (€10 monthly cut)

Qualified Child Increase

Paid to 486,000 children (full rate = 360,000, half rate = 126,000) (April 2010)

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.

2011 rate: Unchanged

Family Income Supplement

Paid to 25,963 families on behalf of 55,716 children (2009)

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.

2011 rate: Unchanged

Number of Children Affected

Together, QCI and FIS support approximately 541,000 children. This leaves approximately 615,000 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 €149.38 million.

2. Education & Skills

The Department of Education and Skills was allocated an overall gross budget of €8.855 billion in 2011. This compares to an allocation of €9.002 billion in 2010, and is equal to a reduction of 2%. Of this overall figure, €8.364 billion will be current expenditure.[15] Capital expenditure will equal €491 million in 2011, as outlined in the *National Recovery Plan 2011-2014*.

SPENDING

School Buildings

- Budget 2011 allocates €491 million for capital expenditure. Of this €383 million will be spent on school buildings: €222 at primary level and €161 at post-primary.
- This will allow the Department to meet the demographic needs of an increased demand for primary and post-primary school places and to make some improvements to the stock of school buildings.

Cost: €383 million in 2011.

Information Technology

- Budget 2011 allocated €1.5 million in capital funding to schools for Information and Communications Technology. This is a significant reduction on the 2010 allocation of €63 million.
- The reduction reflects the push in 2009 and 2010 towards schools' ICT as part of the 'smart schools' programme. In 2011, the focus will be on leveraging this investment to ensure further integration of ICT into teaching and learning.

Cost: €1.5 million in 2011.

CUTS

School Transport

The School Transport Scheme provides subsidised school transport to eligible pupils.[16]

- €180 million will be provided for school transport in 2011, a reduction of €6 million.
- A transport fee of €50 per annum will be introduced for primary school pupils, with a maximum family charge of €110.
- The annual charge for post-primary pupils will be increased by €50 from €300 to €350. The combined maximum overall family charge will remain at €650.
- The distance criteria will be applied to all pupils attending primary schools and the exemption under the closed school rule will cease. This means that children who reside less than 3.2 kilometres (2 miles) from the school of attendance and who are availing of free transport to that school will lose their transport eligibility.
- Services under the minimum numbers will be discontinued. A pick up density of pupils in a distinct locality on a particular route will be required to establish or retain services.[17]
- These measures will be effective for the 2011/12 school year, starting September 2011. Further measures will be introduced in Budget 2012, taking effect the following school year.

Savings: €4.5 million in 2011, rising to €17 million in 2014.

Capitation Grants

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.

15 A further €362 million of current expenditure is provided for under the National Training Fund. The 2011 allocation takes account of upward expenditure pressures mainly in relation to student support payments, the cost of pensions and demographic increases. It also takes account of savings of some €175 million to be secured across the education sector.

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

17 The minimum number of children will increase from the current minimum of 7 to 10.

- There will be a 5% reduction in funding grants to schools and to Vocational Education Committees. These grants include mainstream and ancillary grants for schools, grants for Adult Literacy, Community Education, the School Completion Programme, and Youthreach. Further details on the revised rates will be issued to schools shortly.

Savings: €22 million in 2011.

Teacher Numbers

- 150 extra posts at primary and post-primary schools committed to in the *2009 Renewed Programme for Government* and to be in post in September 2011 will be deferred.
- There will be a reduction of approximately 1,200 teachers (approximately 700 primary and 500 post-primary) which will be partly offset by the addition of an estimated 875 new posts due to demographics.
- Resource teachers for **Travellers** at primary level will be withdrawn and support will be provided on the same basis as other students in schools; at post-primary teaching hours for Travellers will be withdrawn. Alleviation measures will be put in place for schools with a high concentration of Traveller children.[18]
- The 42 Visiting Teachers for Traveller Posts will be removed. These posts are currently assigned to the National Educational Welfare Board.
- **Language Support Teachers** will be reduced by 500 over four years in a phased reduction. It is expected this will be driven by decreased demand, but if necessary a change in allocation rules will be introduced. 125 language support posts will be targeted in September 2011.
- The 47 **DEIS** (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) **rural coordinators** will be removed.
- The existing favourable pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) for the **Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme** (LCVP) will be abolished and the Standard PTR applied. This is a change from 1 teacher for every 17 pupils on the LCVP currently, to 1 teacher for every 19 pupils in September 2011.[19]
- The staffing schedule for Gaelscoileanna will be standardised to be the same as ordinary national schools.
- Some 170 supernumerary posts in post-primary schools will be redeployed from September 2011;

Savings: €24 million (accounted for in the €3.85 billion teacher salary budget) in 2011, rising to €98 million in 2014.

Special Needs Assistants

Children with special care needs arising from a disability attending a mainstream school can be allocated a Special Needs Assistant (SNA). SNAs provide practical (rather than educational) support, such as assisting a child with eating or using the bathroom.

- The number of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) will not be reduced in 2011; however a cap will be placed on the number of SNAs.
- The Department will work with the National Council for Special Education to develop a new system to manage SNA provision within the agreed allocation of posts. Schools will be advised of the new system.

Savings: No savings will be made in 2011. Instead an additional €15 million will be allocated to cover SNA salaries;[20] however the decision to place a cap on SNA posts will yield longer-term savings.

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.

- Budget 2011 caps the number of NEPS psychologists at 178 (rather than increasing to 210 as outlined in Budget 2010).

Savings: €3 million in 2011.

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18 It is not clear what constitutes a 'high concentration' of Traveller children.

19 Or 1 teacher for every 20 pupils in the case of fee-charging schools

20 Pay for Special Needs Assistants in 2011 will be approximately €350 million, compared to €335 million for 2010.

3. Health

The overall Department of Health and Children budget for 2011 will be €14.1billion, a reduction of €727 million, or 5% on the 2010 provision. Savings made from the health budget will total €746 million in 2011;[21] these are drawn from a combination of demand-led schemes (€380 million), procurement and non-core cost savings (€200 million) administrative and other savings (€43 million) and voluntary exit package from the HSE (€123 million). €399 million will be allocated to capital spending in health for 2011, a reduction of €92 million on the 2010 provision.

SPENDING

Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

- Budget 2011 makes provision for expenditure of up to €15 million on priority mental health projects. It is not clear what proportion of this will focus on child and adolescent mental health services.
- Budget 2011 provides €1 million for suicide prevention. This will be allocated to the National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) to build on initiatives to date and to bring added momentum to addressing the incidence of suicide. In particular, it will do the following:
    - Develop the number and range of training and awareness programmes
    - Improve and standardise the response to deliberate self harm
    - Develop the capacity of primary care to respond to suicidal behaviour and consider new models of response
    - Ensure that helpline supports for those in emotional distress are coordinated and widely publicised.

Cost: €15 million for mental health overall and €1 million for suicide, €16 million in total.

Medical Cards and the Drug Payment Scheme

- Budget 2011 provides €115 million in funding for an additional 120,000 medical cards in 2011.
- There is no change to the monthly threshold for the Drug Payment Scheme.

Cost: €115 million

CUTS

Demand Led Schemes

The Department of Health sought a large proportion of savings in Budget 2011 from demand led schemes and reduction in procurement costs, this will involve:

- Price reductions for drugs and other measures agreed with the Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association, a reduction in professional fees (including a reduction in GPs fees paid by the State on behalf of medical card holders), and the implementation of prescription charges.
- Other procurement and non-core pay savings will be generated through a 5% reduction in the total combined non-pay/procurement and non-core pay expenditure, for example payment to agency staff and contracts with suppliers.

Savings: €580 million.

Office of the Ombudsman for Children

- Budget 2011 cuts funding for the Office of the Ombudsman for Children by 5%, from €2.223 million to €2.112 million.

Saving: €111,000.

21 The figure of €746m shown in the Budget Book is slightly higher than the €727 announced for technical reasons. The underlying saving is greater because of the need to provide for a number of key policy priorities: a projected increase in the number of medical cards and other unavoidable costs next year in areas such as superannuation. On the other hand some of this increased expenditure is offset through technical adjustments and further savings already built into next year's figures in areas such as the moratorium on recruitment. In aggregate all of these items require additional savings totalling €746m, as set out above, to achieve the Government's Budgetary target for Health.

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 €326 million for 2011. This is a reduction of €25 million, or 7%, on the 2010 allocation of €351 million.

SPENDING

Constitutional Referendum on Children's Rights

- €3 million allocated to finance the holding of a referendum on children's rights. This is a repeat of the allocation made in Budget 2010, but the Referendum has yet to be held.
- The Joint Committee on the Constitutional Amendment on Children submitted its Third and Final Report in February 2010. They agreed all-party wording for a proposed constitutional amendment.

Cost: €3 million.

Ryan Report Implementation Plan

- €9 million allocated in 2011 to support the continued delivery of the *Ryan Report Implementation Plan*. This brings the total allocation of funding for the *Implementation Plan* to €24 million (€15 million was allocated in Budget 2010).
- This allocation will fund the recruitment of additional social workers to reach the target of 270 social workers in post by end 2011. This is necessary to ensure that all children in care have an allocated social worker and care plan.
- The social worker grade will continue to be exempt from the current moratorium on recruitment and replacement of staff

Cost: €9 million.

Universal Free Pre-School Year

The Universal Free Pre-School Year was introduced in January 2010 and currently supports approximately 65,000 children annually. Children are eligible for the scheme when they are aged between 3 years 3 months and 4 years 6 months on 1 September of the relevant year.

- Budget 2011 retains funding for the free pre-school year in its current form. The free pre-school year will enter its second full year in 2011.
- Budget 2011 identified the free pre-school year as an example of excellent value for money in terms of investment in children's social and educational development.

Cost: €167 million.

Childcare

The National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP) 2006-2010 is a programme of investment in childcare infrastructure. It had an overall budget of €575 million over four years.

- Budget 2011 allocated €10 million in capital funding to complete capital grant commitments under the NCIP.
- This will bring the total expenditure under the NCIP capital grant programme to €186 million over its lifetime, resulting in the creation of 25,000 additional childcare places.

Cost: €10 million.

Youth Cafés

- Budget 2011 allocated €1.34 million to Ireland's first dedicated youth café funding scheme. The scheme will provide new and improved facilities where young people can socialise.

CUTS

Early Intervention Programme for Children

- Budget 2011 cut funding for the Early Intervention Programme for Children from €5.34 million to €4.37 million, or 18%.
- It is not clear from the preliminary Budget documents what services this reduction affects.

Savings: €0.97 million.

Youth Work

- Budget 2011 cut funding to the youth work sector by 6%, from €64.89 million to €60.95 million.

Savings: €3.94 million.

5. Additional Departments

Department of Justice and Law Reform

- Budget 2011 reduced funding for the Irish Youth Justice Service by 24%, from €51,648 million in 2010 to €39,341 million in 2011; a total reduction of €12,307 million.

Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism

- Budget 2011 allocated €91.5 million to sport. This includes €46.9 million for the Irish Sports Council programmes, a 5% reduction on the 2010 allocation. This funding will support the work of over 60 National Governing Bodies such as the GAA, FAI and IRFU as well as many smaller organisations.
- The network of Local Sports Partnerships countrywide will be supported and €33 million is allocated for projects approved under earlier rounds of the Sports Capital Programme.
- Budget 2011 makes over €6.6 million available for the continuation of Local Authority Swimming Pools Programme.

Department of Transport

- Budget 2011 allocates €1.9 million to the Green Schools Programme; this is a reduction of €0.1 million from Budget 2010. The Green Schools Programme works with schools to promote walking to school, cycling, and mixed travel modes; it aims to teach primary school children life lessons in sustainable transport. It currently runs in approximately 680 schools and reaches about 170,000 pupils.
- €27.9 million is allocated to road safety in Budget 2011, a reduction from €33.3 million in 2010. Administrative savings and increasing self-financing in the Road Safety Authority will help achieve this reduced level of expenditure.

Department of Finance

- The minimum wage will be reduced by €1 from €8.65 to €7.65
- Budget 2011 announced the introduction of a new Universal Social Charge. This will replace the existing health levy and the income levy in 2011, and is expected to also include Pay Related Social Insurance (PRSI) in 2012.
- The Universal Social Charge will be paid by all of those earning €4,004 per annum; the rates are:
  - 2% on all income over €4,004 and up to €10,036
  - 4% on all income from €10,037 to €16,016
  - 7% on all income over €16,017
- This change differs from the previous system, which saw those earning between €26,000 and €75,000 paying 6% on combined income and health levies.
- Budget 2011 increased PRSI paid by the self-employed from 3% to 4%. It also abolished the €75,000 PRSI ceiling.

Office of the Revenue Commissioners

- Budget 2011 made a series of changes to the tax system. Those expected to directly affect families (including those affecting primary parental income) are outlined here.
- Budget 2011 reduced the value of tax bands and tax credits by 10%. Now, more people will pay tax at the higher rate of 41%. Changes to the upper threshold of the standard tax band for various family types are outlined below:
  - A reduction for a single or widowed person from €36,400 to €32,800
  - A reduction for a married couple with one income from €45,400 to €41,800
  - A reduction for a married couple with two incomes from €72,800 to 65,600
- Tax Credits were also reduced in Budget 2011:
  - From €1,830 to €1,660 for a single person or one person
  - From €3,660 to €3,300 for married people

- o The Home Carers’ Tax Credit, Blind Person’s Credit and Dependent Relative Tax Credit were also curtailed
- Budget 2011 abolishes or curtails 25 tax reliefs, including the benefit in kind for employer provided childcare.

Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs

- Gross funding for the Department is reduced by a total of 13%; 6% of current spending and 28% of capital spending, to €350,698 million in 2011.
- No detail on specific grants to the Community and Voluntary Sector was available at time of writing.

Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government

- Budget 2011 reduced social housing and provision support by 36%, from €829,557 million to €529,525 million; a total reduction of €300,032 million.
- Budget 2011 cut funding for community and social inclusion by 47%, from €5,655 million in 2010 to €2,989 in 2011; a total reduction of €2,666 million. This budget line covers voluntary and community fora, salaries for RAPID coordinators and some capital funding for items including local resource centres.

III. EXTRACTS FROM ALLIANCE PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION

The following is an extract from the Alliance Pre-Budget Submission to the Department of Social Protection. Full copies of the submission is available on our website www.childrensrights.ie

Section 1: BUDGET 2011

1.1 Supporting children in all families

The Child Benefit Payment is paid to (almost) every child in Ireland and is a clear statement by the Irish State that it values all children in Ireland equally.[22] In difficult economic times, this payment must be maintained at its current level. To reduce, tax or means-test Child Benefit would demonstrate a failure by Government to recognise its unique value to children and families. Particularly now, in uncertain economic times, a regular, reliable payment is of critical importance to families.[23]

Budget 2011 should:

- Maintain the Child Benefit payment at its current level.

1.2 Protecting Children in families with low incomes

The Family Income Supplement (FIS) is designed to incentivise parents into employment; it also plays a key role in rewarding work and protecting those trying to remain in work but on very low incomes. However, take up of FIS 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 28,000 working families,[24] and advances made to it in recent years are welcome. But there is still some way to go.

To be more effective, FIS requires some design changes. Working families are increasingly hit by Budget cuts across departments; in addition, many parents have had their working hours cut and thus may no longer qualify for FIS under the existing rules.[25] The FIS payment must adapt to provide such parents with the flexibility they need to stay in work. The benefits of FIS vary depending on family size and increases in FIS thresholds for larger families over the past number of years. However, 87% of families claiming FIS have 1 to 3 children,[26] yet despite this the increases in FIS thresholds for smaller families have been minimal in recent years. Finally, accessing FIS is still burdensome, it should be reformed to facilitate easier access by eligible families.

Budget 2011 should:

- Adjust the thresholds for the Family Income Supplement (FIS) to compensate for any changes in the rate of, or eligibility criteria for, income tax or the Child Benefit payment.
- Provide more generous increases for small families on FIS, and reduce the withdrawal threshold.
- Reduce the minimum weekly hour requirement for eligibility for FIS for a set period of time in light of the reduction in working hours that many low paid workers now experience.
- Introduce the following measures to increase the take up of FIS among eligible families:
    - Introduce self assessment for claiming FIS.
    - Use the 'sign off' from the Live Register as a trigger for FIS.[27] For example, the Department of Social Protection could issue an information note to the person explaining how to claim FIS and detailing eligibility criteria and other relevant information on signing off from the Live Register.

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22 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 in 2009.

23 See Children's Rights Alliance (2009) *Position Paper on the Child Benefit Payment,* www.childrensrights.ie

24 In August 2010 FIS was being paid to 27,765 families. Information received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the Department of Social Protection, September 2010.

25 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 €506 per week for families with one child and rising to €950 a week with five children).

26 Statistical Information on Social Welfare Services 2009, page 75.

27 As recommended by the Expert Group on Integrating Tax and Welfare, 1996.

1.3 Protecting Children in families dependent on Social Welfare

The Qualified Child Increase (QCI) 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. For these families, adult social welfare rates are the key component of household income and are, therefore, critical in reducing child poverty. The impact on children must be considered in the context of any changes to adult payments. Given the current uncertainty and unpredictability of the economy, the social welfare system must be able to respond to trends in patterns of employment, such as the growth in atypical employment.

Budget 2011 should:

- Maintain the real value of the Qualified Child Increase, by adjusting the payment to compensate for any changes to the rate of, or eligibility criteria for, the Child Benefit payment or social welfare payments.
- Maintain adult social welfare payments at their current rate.
- Adjust the eligibility test for Jobseeker's Allowance to take into account irregular patterns of employment.

1.4 Ensuring the social welfare system works for families

Effective social protection requires the different strands of social welfare supports to develop in an integrated fashion. The interaction between child income supports and other policy measures (support for lone parents, adult social welfare rates, education supports, activation measures and housing supports) must be considered in relation to all proposed changes, given that a change in one could impact on others.[28]

Countries with low child poverty rates rely on a range of policies: access to high quality public services for children, high employment rates, good child income supports and adequate adult social welfare payments. In Ireland, the cost of accessing community level services for children – such as childcare and health care – can be prohibitive. This, combined with inadequately targeted child income supports, means that child poverty remains high.

Budget 2011 should:

- Consider the impact of all budgetary proposals on children.
- Make ending child poverty its goal, in the short and longer-term measures it introduces.

Child poverty did not end in the boom years, but progress was made to greatly reduce the number of children that grow up poor. This work must not be undone by short-term, emergency decisions. Making further cuts to services and supports that are vital to those on low incomes or in receipt of social welfare risks two things, that:

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

Investing in children's human, social, emotional and cultural capital makes long-term sense. Sound policies that build childhood resilience not only benefit children in the here and now, but also contribute to children's preparation for the adult world supporting them to lead more complete lives as adult citizens, parents and workers. A lifecycle approach to budgetary decisions is required.

Section 2: MEDIUM TO LONG TERM VIEW

2.1 Building a responsive social welfare system

The current social welfare system is complex, daunting and cumbersome. If it is to provide services and supports that respond to individual families' needs, the system must be reformed to become more flexible, accessible and responsive. A first step towards this should be integration – strategic rather than structural – of the tax and welfare systems.[29] This would involve greater coordination between the Revenue Commissioners

28 In particular, the implications of any reform to the One Parent Family Payment should be examined. EU SILC figures from 2008 showed that lone parent households were the household type with the highest at risk of poverty rate (36.4% for individuals in these households). They also had the highest rate of consistent poverty among household types: almost one in every five people (17.8%) in lone parent households in 2008 experienced consistent poverty. Lone parent households also recorded the highest deprivation levels of any household type with nearly one quarter (24.2%) of these households experiencing three or more of the eleven deprivation indicators.

29 It is worth noting that there is already some overlap in the work of the Revenue Commissioners and the Department of Social Protection in relation to two existing tax credits: the One-Parent Family Tax Credit and the Home Carers' Tax Credit. See http://www.revenue.ie/en/tax/it/credits/one-parent-family.html and http://www.revenue.ie/en/tax/it/credits/home-carers.html [accessed 1 March 2010].

and the Department of Social Protection, with closer cooperation on policy, standardisation of information systems and more transfer of information between relevant agencies, but not full integration of systems and services.[30] Such a move would help guard against poverty and unemployment traps and would signal a genuine commitment to developing a modern system of social protection as part of a more integrated public service.[31]

Budget 2011 should:

- Commit to strategic integration of the tax and welfare systems by end 2012.[32]
- Set up a working group chaired by the Department of An Taoiseach with representatives from the Department of Finance, Department of Social Protection & Revenue Commissioners to drive this forward.

2.2 Improving Social Mobility

The Government's plan to emerge from the economic crisis is outlined in its vision for a 'Smart Economy'.[33] But to achieve this vision it must recognise the inter-dependency of social and economic policies; and thus, focus equally on improving social mobility. Social mobility has two core aspects: ensuring that there are better jobs for each successive generation; and making sure that there are fairer chances,[34] so that everyone has the opportunity to access jobs in line with their potential.[35] Improved social mobility leads to greater equality of economic opportunities, while at the same time stimulating motivation, effort and the productivity of citizens.[36]

Government has a key role to play in improving social mobility. By focusing its investment on building people's capabilities it can ensure that all its citizens are equipped to be part of a dynamic and active labour force in the future. It can play this role at four key stages of the life cycle by:

1. **Giving children the best start in their early years**: evidence shows that the early years are critical to success in later life. Government investment in early childhood education and care has been shown to pay long-term dividends for individual children and for society.[37]
2. **Improving educational attainment at school**: how children do in school remains the single most important determinant of future success.[38] In Ireland, higher earning power at work is associated with growing up in a better-educated family. Correspondingly, growing up in a less-educated family is linked with lower wages over a lifetime.[39]
3. **Creating pathways from education to work**: although gaining a degree will still prove to be the best predictor of obtaining a better job, there needs to be a less fragmented system of improving pathways for young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to transition more smoothly into work.
4. **Helping people get on in work**: with one of the youngest under-25 populations in Europe, increasing social mobility in Ireland must maintain a medium- to long-term perspective by focusing on equipping those in work to take advantage of future opportunities, like further workplace training. In terms of equity, those who started out with poorer life chances should be specifically targeted with second-chance education, skills training and career progression.

Improving social mobility is about creating a policy environment that facilitates better jobs and fairer chances. It is about considering the future and the quality of life for all citizens when making policy and budgetary decisions across the life cycle. For children, a shift in how policy is designed, drafted and delivered and how budgets are allocated is the first step. This implies a move away from reactionary policy, focused on immediate gains and

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30 D. Clinton et al (1994), *The Commission for Social Justice: Integrating Taxes and Benefits?* London: Institute of Public Policy Research. See also M. Taylor (1998), *The Modernisation of Britain's Tax and Benefit System, Number Two: Work Incentives*, London: HM Treasury.
31 See OECD (2008), *Public Management Reviews - Ireland: Towards an Integrated Public Service*, OECD: Paris, p. 200.
32 See Appendix One for identified potential barriers in relation to integration of tax and welfare systems and response to these concerns.
33 See Government of Ireland (2009) *Building Ireland's Smart Economy: A framework for sustainable economic renewal.* Dublin: Stationery Office.
34 As inequality of outcomes remained stable, or even increased, during the Irish boom years, inequality of opportunity (which is typically measured as the impact of family background on educational, occupational, and income attainment) also remained quite rigid by international standards and has changed little over time.
35 UK Cabinet Office (2009) *Getting on, Getting Ahead: a discussion paper analysing the trends and drivers of social mobility*.
36 OECD (2010) *A Family Affair: Intergenerational social mobility across OECD countries*, p. 4 Part II Chapter 5 in 'Going for Growth'.
37 Relevant research evidence is comprehensively outlined in National Economic and Social Forum (2005) Report no. 31 *Early Childhood Care and Education*, Dublin: National Economic and Social Forum.
38 UK Cabinet Office (2009) *Getting on, Getting Ahead: a discussion paper analysing the trends and drivers of social mobility*.
39 OECD (2010) *A Family Affair: Intergenerational social mobility across OECD countries*, p. 4 Part II chapter 5 in 'Going for Growth'.

quick problem solving, to a joined-up government approach that aims to improve children's outcomes through efficient use of public resources.

Budget 2011 should:

- Departmental decisions should take the lifecycle approach as their starting point.

IV. ALLIANCE POST-BUDGET PRESS STATEMENTS

Immediate Release: Tuesday 7 December 2010

The ABCs that today's children are learning – Anglo, Banks and Cuts

Alliance Response to Budget 2011

The Children's Rights Alliance is deeply disappointed by the announcement in today's Budget that the Child Benefit payment is to be cut for each child by €10, with a double cut of €20 on families with three children. These cuts will have an immediate and a long term negative impact on children. Every family in the country will be affected; with those from low income families worst hit. Child Benefit is the only universal payment to children in this country. It is a significant support to families in covering the costs associated with raising their children.

Today's €10 – and in some cases €20 – cut, per child to Child Benefit is on top of last year's cut of €16 and will push more children into poverty. In 2009, 1 child in every 11 was living in poverty, this marked an increase of 38% on 2008. Unfortunately, it is now certain that child poverty will rise again in the coming year. Of particular concern is that the Budget failed to protect the poorest children (those families receive QCI or FIS) by not introducing a compensating measure to offset the cuts in Child Benefit. The additional cut of €20 to families with 3 children will impact on one in four (101,454) families across the country. According to the ESRI large families are more likely to experience poverty and are more likely to find it difficult to move out of poverty.

In the bigger scheme of things the savings made on Child Benefit are minor: the Government chose to commit an estimated €100 million to build a bypass for Tralee town, in a compensatory measure to Jackie Healy-Rae, TD. If the Government had made a different decision, families across Ireland could have been spared the €10 cut to Child Benefit.

Jillian van Turnhout, Chief Executive, Children's Rights Alliance said *"The Alliance acknowledges that we are country in crisis and we must all pay the price for past mistakes. However, children will pay the biggest price with cuts to Child Benefit, social welfare, education and health. Cuts in today's budget coupled with those outlined in the Four Year Plan will have a long term effect on children as they grow up. Many families, through no fault of their own, will be faced with the stark reality of living in poverty and the knock on effects that this has on the household will be harshly felt by children. Children deserve to be protected, nourished and educated and as we look to the future it will be the duty of today's children to rebuild our nation."*

The Alliance warmly welcomes the allocation of €3 million to hold a referendum on the rights of the child in 2011. In addition, we welcome the retention of the free pre-school year; and the allocation of €9 million to the HSE to support the continued delivery of the Ryan Report Implementation Plan.

The Minister for Finance's speech today only gave a snapshot of the Budget's impact on our children's futures. To ensure additional budgetary measures affecting children are not lost in the debate on banks and billions, the Alliance will tomorrow (Wednesday 8 December) issue a comprehensive analysis of the impact of Budget 2011 on children. This analysis will include a thorough examination of the Budget's 'small print' and will incorporate all measures in the supplementary departmental budgets (to be released this evening), affecting children and their welfare. This analysis will be issued to all media and will be available for download from www.childrensrights.ie

__ENDS__

CONTACT DETAILS FOR MEDIA QUERIES:

Róisín Fitzgerald – Communications Officer - Children's Rights Alliance – 087 7702845

Jillian van Turnhout, Chief Executive is available for comment

Notes to Editor:

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.

8.7%, one in 11 children were living in consistent poverty in 2009; the figure of 6.3% in 2008. Children are the group most exposed to consistent poverty. *Source*: CSO EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2009. http://www.cso.ie/releasespublications/documents/silc/current/silc.pdf

V. APPENDIX I – LIST OF ALLIANCE MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

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

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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