

## Budget 2018

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

The Children's Rights Alliance has summarised *Budget 2018* from a children and young person's perspective.

Importantly, it includes a number of decisions to benefit and improve the lives of thousands of children and their families. A €40 million increase for Tusla (the Child and Family Agency) will help with rebuilding our child protection and welfare system. The introduction of a tax on sugar sweetened drinks is one measure to tackle the high levels of childhood obesity.

The announcement of an extension of eligibility for the extended free pre- school year means that all children will receive a full two years' of pre-school benefiting up to 20,000 children. This universal approach means all families will benefit. However, this is not the year that childcare gets the big investment it needs.

At the same time, we are disappointed that children are still left wanting in certain areas. While all children who have parents on social welfare get an extra €2, we are disappointed that children over the age of 12 didn't get a bigger increase. We know that teenagers are more likely to be living in deprivation and the Budget hasn't addressed this.

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

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### Children and Youth Affairs

The total budget allocated to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs for 2018 is €1.384 billion.

#### *Our response:*

The increase in the Budget for Tusla is an important step in rebuilding our child protection system. The €40 million increase will allow for the development of the Family Resource Centres network which are key to the delivery of universal and targeted supports to families across the country. The development of the out-of- hours service and the provision for the recruitment of 300 new staff are key measures to

rebuild our child protection services.

We welcome the extension of eligibility for the extended Free Preschool Year to ensure that all children will receive a full two years of pre-school benefiting up to 20,000 children. Budget 2018 allocated a 7 per cent increase in the Free Pre - school Year capitation paid to services, the first increase since the introduction of the scheme in 2010.

However, this is not the year that childcare gets the big investment it needs. The failure to provide financial support to providers, specifically to deliver Aistear and Síolta, the national early years curriculum and quality frameworks for children under six, is disappointing. We know that children only benefit from quality provision. Budget 2019 has to include direct funding to services to deliver a national framework and improve quality. It is not yet clear the extent to which the extra €1 million allocated to the early years inspection regime will support the implementation of new regulations and clarity is also needed on the reform of childminding.

*Expenditure measures announced include:*

- Increase the allocation to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency by €40 million, bringing its total allocation to €753.5m - an increase of 5.7 per cent from the 2017 allocation. This will provide for:
  - Improvements in Tusla's ICT systems and overall organisational structures, including governance.
  - Further investment and development of the Family Resource Centres network delivering universal services to families in disadvantaged areas across the country. The additional funding will also allow Tusla develop capacity within the existing 109 Family Resource Centres and build on the strengths of the Programme, community counselling and psychotherapy services. Eleven new Family Resource Centres will be established and family support hubs set up.
  - Recruitment of over 300 staff to respond to areas of identified risk and to meet increased demand for services. This includes resources for responding to expected increases in referrals following the introduction of mandatory reporting; management of unallocated cases and developing aftercare services.
  - Additional funding for Tusla's out-of-hours service is aimed at enhancing the capacity and range of supports for out-of-hours social work services. Central to this is the planned integration of the three existing out-of-hours services into one national service with a national contact number, and the introduction of an out-of-hours call centre for foster carers. This development will ensure that all parts of the country have access to a social work service on a 24/7 basis.
- €28 million for capital expenditure including capital funding of €4.2m to support the completion of building works on the Oberstown Children Detention Campus.
- €1m increase to the Irish Youth Justice Service bringing its allocation to €23.7m to meet operational costs associated with the Oberstown Campus, funding to support the rollout of the Bail Supervision scheme and implement findings from

a number of independent reviews on operations.

- An increase in current funding of €20m for childcare services to:
  - From September 2018, extend ECCE from the current average of 61 weeks ensuring an entitlement to a full two year service (76 weeks) for all qualifying children.
  - Also from September 2018, increase capitation by 7per cent for ECCE services.
  - Provide funding to meet full year costs associated with a universal payment and increase in the subsidies under the Community Childcare Subvention targeted schemes introduced in September 2017 in advance of the commencement of the Single Affordable Childcare Scheme.
  - A total of €18m will be available in 2018 and thereafter to pay providers for the administration associated with these schemes and the ECCE scheme.
  - A total of €2.3m was also secured for a range of initiatives including to further enhance the Early Years Inspection regime and to further address sustainability concerns being expressed by some community providers.
- An increase of €1.5m to support youth work programmes and services by the voluntary youth work sector.
- An additional €2.7m to support the area based approach to child poverty (ABC programme) to maintain all existing sites in 2018.
- €2.2m for cross-border initiatives aimed at children and young people under the PEACE IV programme to contribute towards the promotion of greater levels of peace and reconciliation.
- €4.1m to further progress the National Longitudinal Study 'Growing up in Ireland'.
- €4.6m to the Adoption Authority of Ireland to support it in the fulfilment of its statutory obligations.
- €2.7m to the Office of the Ombudsman for Children to support its operational activities.

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## Education and Skills

The total Education budget allocated to the Department of Education and Skills for 2018 will be €10.085 billion, a 5.8% increase on last year's budget allocation.

*Our response:*

This year has seen continued investment in education. The reducing of the pupil teacher ratio and the 100 guidance teaching posts are key measures to ensure that children will get a better quality education. The focus on Special Needs Assistants and resource teachers will give added support to those who need it.

*Expenditure measures announced include:*

- €745 million for capital expenditure. This will support the creation of up to an additional 12,000 permanent school places and 3,000 replacement places in 2018 through the delivery of the 76 Large Scale Projects Programme, as well as acquiring new sites for school buildings, the additional accommodation scheme and emergency works scheme.
- 1,091 Special Needs Assistants.
- 1,280 new teaching posts in schools in 2018. Including:
  - 545 new teaching posts to cater for an estimated 8,000 extra pupils in 2018
  - 305 posts to provide for a reduction in the primary staffing schedule from 27:1 to 26:1
  - 230 new teachers in special classes and special schools
  - 100 new Special Education teachers
  - 100 teaching posts for guidance
  - 10 National Education Psychological Service psychologists will be recruited in 2018.
- €2 million for a new Pilot scheme for in-school Speech and Language Therapists.
- €0.4 million to fund additional release days for teaching principals in primary schools, which allows them to undertake administrative, leadership and management functions within the school.

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## Health

The total Budget allocated to the Department of Health for 2018 is €15.291 billion, including €493 million for capital expenditure.

*Our response:*

The 'Sugar Tax' is an important step to tackle childhood obesity. As we face another year where children from age six upwards will not receive free GP care, as promised we are glad to hear of the Minister for Health's intention to progress the commitment through contract negotiations with GPs. While we welcome the increased investment in the National Treatment Purchase Fund to increase access to services, priority needs to be given to children who have languished on waiting lists for far too long.

*Expenditure measures announced include:*

- The introduction of a tax on sugar sweetened drinks – 30 cent on any drink over 8mg of sugar per litre and 20 cent on any drink with 5 to 8 mg of sugar per litre.
- Mental health services will receive €35 million in additional funding in 2018 with €40 million in additional funding agreed for 2019. This will provide for the enhancement of Community Teams for Children and help continue our move towards a full 24/7 service with an initial focus on increasing the provision of

services on a seven-day-a-week basis.

- Prescription charges for medical card holders under 70 years of age are reduced to €2 per item, up to a maximum of €20 in any month, in line with the reduction applied to over 70s in Budget 2017.
- An increase investment in the National Treatment Purchase Fund from its original allocation of €20m in 2017 to €55m in 2018.
- Provision of a €25 million primary care fund to support development of GP services, expand community intervention teams and hire more Occupational Therapists.
- New €250,000 programme to promote community awareness of alcohol-related harm.
- €5 million for the Healthy Ireland Fund.

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## Employment Affairs and Social Protection

The total Budget allocated to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection for 2018 is €20.012 billion, an increase of one per cent on the 2017 allocation.

*Our response:*

The increase to social welfare payments has not gone far enough to address child poverty. We are disappointed that there were no targeted measures introduced for children over the age of 12. We know that teenagers are more likely to be living in deprivation and the Budget hasn't addressed this. There is no extra help in this budget with the cost of going to school. Children in Direct Provision are once again being left behind with no measures in the Budget to increase their weekly payment. We are disappointed that there was no provision made in the budget for the extension of Parental Leave and Benefit.

*Expenditure measures announced include:*

- Increase by €5 the maximum weekly rate of payment for all social welfare recipients, with proportional increases for qualified adults and those on reduced rates of payment. This includes maternity, paternity and adoptive benefits.
- Targeted weekly increases of €2 per child in the qualified child increase payment.
- An increase in the earnings disregard for the One Parent Family Payment and Jobseeker's Transitional scheme by €20 per week, from €110 to €130 per week.
- Increase in the Working Family Payment (formally Family Income Supplement)

thresholds by €10 per week for families with up to three children.

- Funding of €54 million for school meals in 2018 up from €47.5 million in 2017 to provide for 18,400 extra children and 80 newly designated DEIS schools from September 2018.
- Increase in the minimum wage by 30 cent to €9.55 per hour.

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## Housing, Planning and Local Government

The total Budget allocated to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government for 2018 is €2.457 billion.

*Our response:*

We look forward to seeing a breakdown of how the significant increases to funding for homeless services will be used to ensure children do not spend long periods living in inappropriate accommodation without access to their own space to play and learn. The increase in funding for the Housing Assistance Payment and the allocation for social housing is welcome, but more needs to be done to end our continued reliance on the private rented sector to provide people with long-term homes.

*Expenditure measures announced include:*

- €40 million to provide for an additional 17,000 households to be accommodated under the Housing Assistance Payment.
  - A total allocation of €301 million enabling more than 17,000 additional households to be accommodated under the Housing Assistance Payment.
  - Increased funding of over €30 million bringing the total provision under the Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SCHEP) to almost €115 million which will deliver over 4,000 additional homes in 2018 (almost doubling the support provided in 2017).
  - Following the review of Rebuilding Ireland, an additional 800 houses will be delivered through direct build instead of acquisitions, bringing the new build of social homes to 3,800 in 2018.
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