CHILDREN'S RIGHTS ALLIANCE

Uniting Voices for Children

Analysis of Budget 2014 and its Impact on Children

October 2013

The Children's Rights Alliance is a coalition of over 100 organisations working to secure the rights of children in Ireland, by campaigning for the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. We aim to improve the lives of all children under 18 years, through securing the necessary changes in Ireland's laws, policies and services.

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.

24 October 2013
This is an in-house publication.

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.

Alcohol Action Ireland
Amnesty International Ireland
Ana Liffey Drug Project
Arc Adoption
The Ark, A Cultural Centre for Children
Assoc. for Criminal Justice Research and Development (ACJRD)
Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI)
ATD Fourth World – Ireland Ltd
Barnardos
Barretstown Camp
BeLonG To Youth Services
Bessborough Centre
Border Counties Childhood Network
CARI Foundation
Carr's Child and Family Services
Catholic Guides of Ireland
Catholic Youth Care
Childhood Development Initiative
Children in Hospital Ireland
City of Dublin YMCA
COPE Galway
Crosscare
DIT – School of Social Sciences & Legal Studies
Doras Luimni
Down Syndrome Ireland
Dublin Rape Crisis Centre
Dun Laoghaire Refugee Project
Early Childhood Ireland
Educate Together
School of Education UCD
EPIC
Focus Ireland
Forbairt Naíonraí Teoranta
Foróige
GLEN - Gay and Lesbian Equality Network
Headstrong - The National Centre for Youth Mental Health
Immigrant Council of Ireland
Inclusion Ireland
Inspire Ireland
Institute of Community Health Nursing
Integration Centre
International Adoption Association
Irish Association of Social Care Workers (IASCW)
Irish Association of Social Workers
Irish Association of Suicidology
Irish Autism Action
Irish Centre for Human Rights, NUI Galway
Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)
Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL)
Irish Foster Care Association
Irish Girl Guides
Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO)
Irish Penal Reform Trust
Irish Premature Babies
Irish Refugee Council
Irish Second Level Students' Union (ISSU)
Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
Irish Traveller Movement
Irish Youth Foundation (IYF)
Jack & Jill Children's Foundation
Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice
Junglebox Childcare Centre F.D.Y.S.
Kids' Own Publishing Partnership
Lifestart National Office
Marriage Equality – Civil Marriage for Gay and Lesbian People
Mary Immaculate College
Mental Health Reform
Mothers' Union of Ireland
Mounttown Neighbourhood Youth and Family Project
MyMind
National Association for Parent Support
National Organisation for the Treatment of Abusers (NOTA)
National Parents Council Post Primary
National Parents Council Primary
National Youth Council of Ireland
One Family
One in Four
OPEN
Parentline
Parentstop
Pavee Point
Peter McVerry Trust
Rape Crisis Network Ireland (RCNI)
Realt Beag
Saoirse Housing Association
SAOL Beag Children's Centre
Scouting Ireland
Society of St. Vincent de Paul
Sonas Housing Association
SpunOut.ie
St. Nicholas Montessori College
St. Nicholas Montessori Society
St. Patrick's Mental Health Services
Start Strong
Step by Step Child & Family Project
Sugradh
The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway
Treoir
UNICEF Ireland
Unmarried and Separated Families of Ireland
youngballymun
Youth Advocate Programme Ireland (YAP)
Youth Work Ireland

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1. Overview of Budget 2014

This document provides an overview of the Budget and its impact on children and is divided into three sections. The first analyses Budget 2014 and explains positive and negative impacts of the Budget impacts on children. The second details the measures introduced by key departments. The Alliance's pre-Budget submission and post-Budget press statement are included in the appendices.

Budget 2014: The Background

Budget 2014 – the third delivered by the Fine Gael/Labour Coalition Government – was the last to be delivered with the Troika still in town. On 15 December 2013 the Irish Government will regain control of the country's finances, and the European Union (EU)/International Monetary Fund (IMF)/European Central Bank (ECB) Troika will exit, having provided a bailout of almost €70 billion to this small country. The last four years have been deeply painful for Irish people. No one is untouched by the crisis, and its impact on family finances – through deep cuts and multiple taxes, and on family life – through emigration, stress and now, sheer survival, will not be forgotten in the short term.

But, if Budget speeches are to be believed, we are starting to emerge from the crisis. The 2014 Budget will bring in a deficit of 4.8% and a small primary surplus, showing that our national debt, which has been rising for so many years, is now under control. To get there the Minister for Finance, Michael Noonan TD and his Cabinet colleague, Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Brendan Howlin TD, announced an adjustment of €3.1 billion in Budget 2014, of which €2.5 billion will consist of expenditure cuts and tax increases.

Before we examine the measures within Budget 2014 let us first outline its structure, which has been subject to significant reform. Firstly, this year's budget took place on 15 October, almost two months earlier than traditional budgets. This change is part of the new 'EU Semester'[1], which aims to ensure that EU level discussions on budget issues will take place before Governments draw up their own draft budgets. The EU Semester provides that the draft budget (based on independent macroeconomic forecasts)[2] must be published by October 15th annually, and the corresponding legislation to adopt or implement the Budget must be completed before the end of the year. This requires that the Finance Bill process and the Revised Estimates are completed before the Dáil breaks for Christmas recess. Further elements of budgetary reform refer to the 'six pack', a body of six legislative acts, adopted in November 2011, that translated the initial EU reform proposals into binding rules; and the 'two pack', which, in May 2013, introduced additional budgetary coordination in the euro area. This includes a common budgetary timeline and enhanced economic surveillance of Member States in financial difficulty. The combination of these reforms firmly links our national budget process to the EU.

The earlier date of the budget, the advance preparation required (over the summer months and before) to ensure full compliance with regulation, the national sense that this was to be the last 'austerity' budget, and endless leaks in the weeks leading up to 15 October all led to a certain sense of deflation on the day: there were few surprises. This is in line with what the Government intended. Minister Howlin has been clear about his preference for a move away from big announcements on budget day, to multi-annual, consultative budgeting, that engages the Oireachtas, but the second part of this vision has yet to be achieved.

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[1] The European Semester provides that EU Member States must submit their Stability or Convergence Programmes and National Reform Programmes by the end of April each year. This means that the This means that the examination of these programmes and the related EU-level discussions on fiscal policy, macroeconomic imbalances, financial sector issues, and growth-enhancing structural reforms will now always take place before governments draw up their draft budgets. The aim of this 'upstream' policy coordination is to make the implementation of policy guidance more effective and help embed the EU dimension in national policy-making so that the policies adopted by Member States reflect jointly agreed priorities. The full implementation of the Semester enables the recommendations made at EU level to inform the national budgets adopted by member states.

[2] Defined as forecasts produced or endorsed by an independent body

Budget 2014 was very much jobs-focused. Its purpose, according to the Minister for Finance was to:

- Re-inforce policies that grow the economy
- Establish the conditions that will create jobs
- Prepare for exiting the bailout programme

There were some headlines: social welfare rates, income tax and Child Benefit were maintained at current rates; Maternity Benefit was cut, as were various benefits for older people. The 'old reliables' of alcohol and cigarettes were taxed, and a raft of initiatives to create jobs and stimulate the economy were introduced.

Each year we assess the impact of the budget on children and their rights, but the true story of its impact can only be understood by taking into account the cumulative impact of previous budget cuts, and changes to families' take-home pay. In Budget 2014, child income supports were maintained at 2013 rates which is a welcome relief to families with children. In this Budget there are a mix of positives and negatives, and, a number of unanswered questions.

Positives for children in Budget 2014:

- The introduction of free GP care for children aged five and below, at a cost of €37 million
- Maintenance of the Child Benefit Payment
- Maintenance of Family Income Supplement, the Qualified Child Increase and the One Parent Family Payment at 2013 rates
- Additional funding in key areas including €6.7 million for the Child and Family Agency, €2 million for Garda Vetting, €5 million for a national book rental scheme, €9 million for the roll-out of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, €4.5 million funding allocated to the Pre-School Quality Agenda and €1.5 million for the Area Based Childhood (ABC) programme
- Recruitment of 1,400 new teachers to start in the 2014/15 school year
- €20 million ring-fenced for mental health services, with a focus on building community mental health teams
- €31 million for the redevelopment of the National Children Detention Facility at Oberstown, Co. Dublin
- €15 million increase in the Budget of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA)

Negatives for children in Budget 2014:

- 12% reduction in maternity benefit
- Failure to restore the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance to 2012 levels
- Increase in the prescription charge to €2.50 per medicine and a monthly cap of €25
- Incremental cuts to Youth Programmes

Many of the budget announcements and initiatives are made with little information on how they will be implemented. In Budget 2014 a number of things remain unclear:

- HSE Child and Family Services is carrying a historical deficit. This line is scheduled to transfer to the new Child and Family Agency when it is established in January 2014. What will happen to the deficit at that point?
- How much of the €20 million allocated to mental health services will be allocated to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) ensuring that existing or new vacancies are filled in CAMHS this year? In 2013, €3.6 million was allocated to CAMHS[3] but only 140 out of a total of 230 posts assigned to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in both 2012 and 2013[4] had been filled.

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[3] Mental Health Reform (2013) HSE 2013 National Service Plan Highlights available online at: http://www.mentalhealthreform.ie/hse-2013 national-service-plan-highlights/.

[4] Kathleen Lynch TD, Minister of State with responsibility for Disability, Older People, Equality & Mental Health, Parliamentary Questions: Written Answers, [44033/13], Dáil Debate, 17 October 2013, unrevised.

- Spending on Special Educational Needs is to be maintained at its current rate of €1.3 billion, but how will this figure be managed to cope with increased demand for services?
- €113 million will be saved through 'medical card probity' by "improving the accuracy of the medical card system". This is a huge saving. Who exactly will be affected by this measure?
- A new Single Person Child Carer Tax Credit is to replace the One-Parent Family Tax Credit. How will this payment be administered in situations where parents share custody of children and the parent deemed the primary carer is not in employment to avail of the credit?
- €1 million was allocated to youth programmes, yet a saving of €2 million was made on the same programmes. How can these numbers be explained?

Finally, the new budgetary process provides for rigorous planning but little evaluation of delivery. There is also no clarity as to how strategic decisions were made without conducting proper social or poverty impact assessments in relation to proposed cuts. Where are the accountability structures associated with the Budget? How can we review it next year to see whether commitments have been delivered in full?

On balance, children escaped the majority of cuts in this budget. But childhood is about more than one budget, and since 2008 childhoods have been chipped away with one cut after another. Still, nearly 10% of children in Ireland live in consistent poverty[5] with almost double that –18.8% – at risk of poverty.[6] Future budgets must be about addressing this grave problem once and for all and truly realising children's rights in Ireland.

The introduction of free GP care is a first step to achieving one of the core obligations of General Comment No. 15 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child,[7] namely, that under the Convention the State has to ensure "universal coverage of quality primary health services, including prevention, health promotion, care and treatment services, and essential drugs".[8] The World Health Organisation has clearly stated that "[t]he goal of universal health coverage is to ensure that everyone can use the health services they need without risk of financial ruin or impoverishment".[9] Furthermore, the concept of universal healthcare was the subject of a draft resolution passed unanimously by the UN General Assembly in December 2012. The Department of Health, in its own document, *Future health: a strategic framework for reform of the health service 2012 – 2015*,[10] refers to the ultimate goal of a universal healthcare system but acknowledges that "reforms will be introduced in a step by step manner". This would appear to be the first step on this path.

The Alliance believes that the decision to cut Maternity Benefit, on top of taxing this payment last year, will push women back to work early, interfering with their ability to breastfeed and care for their newborn child. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has issued a General Comment specifically on early childhood[11] which emphasises that "[e]arly childhood is the period of most extensive (and intensive) parental responsibilities related to all aspects of children's well-being covered by the Convention".[12] The Committee reminds States that children's rights and well-being are dependent on the support and resources available to their parents and encourages the State to take an "integrated approach [which] would include interventions that impact indirectly on parents' ability to promote the

[5] CSO; EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2011 & revised 2010 results http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/silc/2011/silc_2011.pdf 'The consistent poverty measure looks at those persons who are defined as being at risk of poverty and experiencing enforced deprivation.'
[6] At Risk of Poverty is defined as '…the share of persons with an equivalised income below a given percentage (usually 60%) of the national median income. It is also calculated at 40%, 50% and 70% for comparison. The rate is calculated by ranking persons by equivalised income from smallest to largest and then extracting the median or middle value. Anyone with an equivalised income of less than 60% of the median is considered at risk of poverty at a 60% level.'
[7] UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2013) General Comment No. 15: the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health CRC/C/GC/15.
[8] *Ibid*, para. 73.
[9] World Health Organisation (2013) *The World Health Report 2013: Research for Universal Health Coverage*
[10] Department of Health (2012) *Future health: a strategic framework for reform of the health service 2012 – 2015*
[11] UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, (2005) General Comment No. 7: Implementing Child Rights in early Childhood, UN Doc. CRC/GC/2005/7.
[12] *Ibid*, para. 20.

best interests of children (e.g. taxation and benefits, adequate housing, working hours)."[13] It is not clear that the decision to cut Maternity Benefit was taken in the child's best interests.

The failure to restore the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance (BSCFA), the only payment dedicated to supporting parents with the cost of school by helping to meet the cost of uniforms and footwear for school-going children is disappointing.

These two choices are surprising, in a country that, just last year, voted to strengthen children's rights in our Constitution and, twenty years ago ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention is a comprehensive, internationally binding agreement on the rights of children, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989. It has been ratified by 193 states, all countries except the US, Somalia and South Sudan, and is the most widely accepted human rights treaty internationally. By ratifying the Convention, the State undertook to promote, protect and fulfill the rights therein. As part of its obligations under the Convention, the State must report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child that monitors the implementation of the Convention on a periodic basis.[14] The UN Committee in 2006 reminded the Irish Government of its obligation to ensure that children are protected against the negative impact of economic hardship on their development.[15] Ireland submitted its consolidated third and fourth reports to the UN Committee in September 2013. Given the backlog at the Committee it is unlikely that the date will be examined before the end of 2015, at the earliest.[16]

The right to an adequate standard of living is a key right under the Convention. It provides, under Article 27, that every child has the right to a standard of living that is adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. While the provision recognises that parents and guardians have the primary role in providing financially for a child, states must take appropriate measures to assist parents and guardians according to its means, including the provision of material assistance and support programmes. While the right to an adequate standard of living is a qualified right in that it is subject to the economic conditions of the State, children and struggling families should not disproportionately bear the brunt of budgetary cuts and the State should not roll-back on any achievements made to date. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has stated that "economic policies are never neutral in their effect on children's rights". It went on to express deep concern at the negative effects on children of structural adjustment programmes for example.[17]

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has recognised the negative impacts of growing up in both relative poverty and absolute poverty noting that growing up in absolute poverty poses a threat to a child's survival and their health. Growing up in relative poverty, the Committee opines "undermines children's well-being, social inclusion and self-esteem and reduces opportunities for learning and development".[18] Commenting on obligations arising under Article 27, the Committee has called on states to implement systematic strategies to reduce poverty in early childhood as well as combat its negative effects on children's well-being. All possible means should be employed, including "material assistance and support programmes" for children and families, in order to assure to young children a basic standard of living consistent with their rights.[19]

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[13] *Ibid*, para. 20.

[14] The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child is a committee of 18 independent and international experts that monitor each state's implementation of the UNCRC.

[15] United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2006) Concluding Observations: Ireland (CRC/C/IRL/CO/2 paragraph 57(a)).

[16] Ireland's most recent review by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child took place in 2006. The Committee recommended that Ireland:
- Effectively implement the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and strengthen support for families living in economic hardship.
- Introduce a supplement to the existing universal child benefit payment as an additional and targeted allowance to assist families that experience the highest levels of poverty.
- Implement fully existing policies and strategies and increase budgetary allocations for and subsidisation of services (childcare, healthcare etc.) for families with children that are particularly vulnerable.
- Increase investment in social and affordable housing for low-income families.

[17] UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2003) General Comment No. 5, para. 52.

[18] UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, (2005) General Comment No. 7: Implementing Child Rights in early Childhood, UN Doc. CRC/GC/2005/7, para. 10.

[19] United Nations (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child.

2. Key Positives and Negatives of Budget 2014

This section highlights some of the changes arising from Budget 2014 that are of particular importance to children.[20] These issues are split into two sections – those changes that we welcome, and those that disappoint us.

Key Positives of Budget 2014

✓ Free GP care for children aged five years and below

The Alliance welcomes the decision to provide €37 million for free General Practitioner (GP) care for all children aged five years and below as a step towards its Programme for Government commitment to Universal Health Insurance. As part of the primary care system, the local GP is a child's first point of contact when ill, and a well-resourced, responsive and effective service has the potential to prevent the development of conditions that may later require more intensive treatment or hospitalisation. It may also relieve the pressure on children's hospitals if treatment is sought at an earlier stage. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child calls for States to provide necessary health care to all children with an emphasis on the development of primary health care (Article 24).[21] The removal of GP fees is in line with that call and therefore warmly welcomed by the Alliance. However, it is important that this new measure is not at the expense of children with high level health needs.[22]

✓ Child Benefit maintained

The Child Benefit Payment, the only payment targeted at all children in Ireland, was maintained in Budget 2014. This is a welcome relief to families, who quite simply could not have coped with any more cuts to this core payment. Cuts to Child Benefit over four consecutive budgets have reduced monthly child income supports by almost €100 for families with three or more children, with no compensation for those on the lowest incomes. Child Benefit is the State's key mechanism for supporting parents with their child rearing duties, in line with Article 18 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which obliges states to support parents and legal guardians in caring and providing for their children. The payment makes an important contribution to ensuring every child's right to an adequate standard of living (Article 27), yet even with this payment, child poverty remains a problem in Ireland. Most recent figures found that in 2011, nearly 10% of children were living in consistent poverty.

✓ Funding of €4.5 million for Pre-School Quality Agenda

The scheme is Ireland's key mechanism to support children in the early years, supporting their right to development under Article 6 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and right to education under Article 28 of the Convention. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child "interprets the right to education during early childhood as beginning at birth and closely linked to young children's right to maximum development (Article 6.2)"[23] so this is an important step towards fulfilling this important right for young children. Minister Fitzgerald has referred to this initiative as "laying the solid foundation for a further expansion of universal childcare provision in Ireland, to support children and support families."[24] Under the scheme, €1.1 million will be dedicated to the Pre-School Inspectorate which will come under the remit of the upcoming Child and Family Agency. A mentoring service for pre-school services will also be established to work and newly trained graduates will help to implement the Siolta framework and

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[20] All figures in this document are sourced from the Department of Finance, Expenditure Report 2013 Part I-Part IV, 5 December 2012, together with press releases and factsheets from the Departments of Social Protection, Education and Skills, Health, Children and Youth Affairs published on 5 December 2012.
[21] UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, A/RES/44/25 (20 November 1989), Article 24 (b).
[22] Mary Regan, 'Mother fighting for son's medical card wants Kenny to answer her questions' Irish Examiner, 14 October 2013.
[23] UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2006) *General Comment No. 7: Implementing child rights in early childhood*, CRC/C/GC/7/Rev.1
[24] Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 'Government investing in important reforms for children and families – Fitzgerald' [press release], 15 October 2013, http://www.dcya.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?Docid=2999&CatID=11&mn=&StartDate=1+January+2013.

Aistear curriculum for babies to six year olds. Part of this funding will also help existing staff in the sector to up-skill and comply with qualification requirements due to be introduced in September 2015.

✓ Additional funding of €6.7 million for the new Child and Family Agency

The new Child and Family Agency, to be established in January 2014 is fundamental to effective reform of our child protection and family support services. The additional €6.7 million in 2014 (rising to €12 million in a full year) for this ambitious task is both welcome and necessary. It will support the programme of reform for child welfare and protection services to be implemented by the Agency, which will allow for an improvement in the quality of services and effective response to the increased demand in child protection referrals. The promise of this additional funding is slightly tarnished by the question – outlined below – as to the HSE Child and Family Services deficit. It is vital that the €6.7 million is used by the State to fulfill its duties under Articles 19 (protect children from abuse and neglect) and 39 (support rehabilitation of victims of abuse) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, not to plug a HSE deficit. It is also unclear whether the budget of €534 million dedicated to Children and Family Services under the HSE sub-head will be exempt from the cuts that the Minister for Health will be obliged to make before the end of the year. The Alliance assumes the total budget of €534 million will automatically transfer to the new Agency and would have grave concerns if it was reduced in any way.

✓ Funding of €31 million for redevelopment of Oberstown Campus

The construction of a new national children's detention facility at Oberstown, County Dublin is a welcome development which addresses the long-standing issue of children being detained in adult prisons. The new facility is due to be completed in the third quarter of 2014 and will result in a single-campus location for all detention services for children and the imprisonment of young people in adult prisons will cease. The completion of this project will ensure that Ireland is no longer in breach of Article 37 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which requires that "every child deprived of liberty shall be separated from adults."

✓ Allocation of €2 million for increased Garda vetting

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provides that a child has a right to protection from abuse and neglect (Article 19), including sexual and other forms of exploitation (Articles 34–36). To ensure that children are adequately protected, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommends that States coordinate and implement child protection policies, strategies and services. In their Concluding Observations on Ireland in 2006, the UN Committee called for proper vetting of prospective employees and volunteers for all those working with children. The process for vetting paid employees will be put in place following commencement of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Bill 2012 but a date has not yet been set for this. The number of applications for Garda Vetting to the Garda Central Vetting Unit has almost doubled since 2007 from approximately 187,000 to 350,000, resulting in delays in the turnaround of vetting applications. The allocation of additional funding in Budget 2014 is welcome and should allow for the reduction in delays for Garda Vetting.

✓ Allocation of €5 million towards a national book rental scheme

Equipping a child with adequate literacy and numeracy skills is central to their progression from a life of poverty, disadvantage and marginalisation. Therefore, the Alliance welcomes the decision to allocate €5 million to primary schools in 2014 for investment in book rental schemes. This is a positive development from the point of view of improving literacy *and* reducing the cost burden on parents with young children. Over three years, this investment will amount to €15 million. This is an important first step to encourage widespread book rental schemes and that has the potential, once and for all, to end the ransom of parents by book publishers. Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provides that every child has the right to education and States such as Ireland that have ratified the Convention shall promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education, in particular towards the elimination of illiteracy.[25]

[25] UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, A/RES/44/25 (20 November 1989).

Key Negatives of Budget 2013

✗ 12% reduction in Maternity Benefit

Maternity Benefit is a state benefit paid to all women on maternity leave from work to care for a newborn child. Budget 2013 changed the terms of this payment by making it subject to tax, at a cost of up to €108 per week to recepients. This year, the payment has been 'standardised' at €230 per week, a cut of €32 weekly for the 90%+ of recepients who get the payment at the higher rate of €262. For the 10% on the lower rate of €217.80, their payment will be increased by €12.20 weekly. The change means that any woman taking maternity leave from January will be €832 worse off, and, combining this with taxation of the payment, she will have reduced income of up €3,500 over the course of her maternity leave. This decision risks pushing mothers back to work earlier at a time when caring for their child is critically important. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child promotes the rights of the children of working parents (Article 18) and calls for the State to make efforts to ensure that working parents can fulfill their parental responsibilities. The Committee in its *General Comment No. 15 on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health*[26] highlights the need for "social protection interventions, including social security such as child grants or subsidies, cash transfers" concluding that these "include ensuring universal coverage or financial access to care, paid parental leave and other social security benefits."[27] Cuts to Maternity Benefit may further curtail a working mother's capacity to breastfeed her child which in turn undermines the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's recommendation that "special measures should be taken to promote community and workplace support for mothers in relation to pregnancy and breastfeeding".[28] It is also interesting to note that while the State has ratified the majority of the rights enshrined in the Revised European Social Charter, it has failed to sign up to Article 8(3) which provides for nursing mothers to be entitled to sufficient time off for the purpose of breastfeeding.

✗ No restoration of the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance

The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance (BSCFA) is the only payment dedicated to supporting parents with the cost of school. In 2013, Barnardos research found that going back to school cost €350 for a child in senior infants and €785 for a first year pupil in secondary school. Last year's budget reduced the value of the BSCFA from €250 to €200 for children aged 12 years or more and from €150 to €100 for children aged four to 11 years. This was on top of cuts in 2012, meaning that over two years, the payment fell from €305 to €200 (a cut of almost 35%) for children aged over 12 and from €200 to €100 (a cut of 50%) for children aged 4-11 years. These cuts seriously restrict parents' ability to provide for their children at this important time of year. The Alliance has repeatedly called for the reversal of cuts to the BSCFA.

✗ Lack of clarity on the HSE budgetary deficit being carried under the heading of Children and Family Services

The HSE's Children and Family Services budget was reduced by €12 million in Budget 2014, the Alliance understands through re-organised budget heads. The HSE Child and Family Services will be transferred to the new Child and Family Agency, under the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, in January 2014 when the Agency is formally established. Children and Family Services is reportedly carrying a serious historical deficit which needs to be wiped out if the Child and Family Agency is to be given a fighting chance at reforming our services for children and their families.

The State has a duty under Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to take all measures necessary to protect children from abuse and neglect and to support the rehabilitation of victims of abuse (Article 39). It is clearly documented that there is an increase in demand for social work services and that the system is struggling to meet that demand.[29] The Government must prioritise a child's right to protection from neglect and abuse.

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[26] UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2013) General Comment No. 15: the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health CRC/C/GC/15.
[27] *Ibid*, para. 29.
[28] *Ibid*, para. 44.
[29] Claire O'Sullivan, 'No social worker hired three months after shortages criticised', Irish Examiner, 19 September 2013; Shane Phelan, 'Over 4,000 vulnerable children waiting three months for help', Irish Independent, 20 August 2013.

3. Overview of Departmental Expenditure and Cuts

This section highlights the changes introduced in four principal departments affecting children: Social Protection; Education and Skills; Health and the Health Service Executive (HSE) and Children and Youth Affairs. It also outlines a variety of measures affecting children from other government departments and agencies including: the Department of Justice and Equality; the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources; the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government; the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform; the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport; the Department of Finance Group; and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

3.1 Social Protection

The Social Protection budget will be €19.65 billion in 2014, a 3% reduction in spending on the 2013 allocation of €20.24 billion. Expenditure in 2014 will break down as €19.63 billion in current expenditure and €85 million in capital expenditure. In preparing for Budget 2014 the Department of Social Protection was originally requested to make savings of €440 million, however, it reduced this to €226 million as a result of savings made by reducing the numbers on the Live Register. Overall, the Department's cumulative adjustment will be €290 milion, as an additional €30 million will be saved through fraud and control mechanisms while €34 million will be saved due to increased efficiencies and lower than expected take up of certain schemes.

The Social Protection vote (number 37) makes up 40% of Government current spending in 2014.[30]

SPENDING

Child Benefit payment

The Child Benefit payment is paid to almost all parents in Ireland on behalf of their children. In October 2013, 607,437 families received the monthly Child Benefit payment in respect of almost 1.16 million children.[31]

Budget 2014:

- Maintained Child Benefit at €130 per month for the first, second and third child in families.
- Reduced Child Benefit by €10 (from €140 to €130) for fourth and subsequent children.

This change was announced in Budget 2013 and so was not a surprise for families in Budget 2014. It brings Child Benefit to a single, uniform rate of €130 per month for all children.

The cost of providing Child Benefit will increase by 1% from €1,911.72 million in 2013 to €1,923.3 million in 2014, due to an increase in the number of eligible children.

[30] Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (2013), Expenditure Report 2014: October 2013, Dublin: the Stationery Office, p. 105.
[31] Information supplied to the Alliance by the Department of Social Protection on 22 October 2013.

Qualified Child Increase

The Qualified Child Increase (QCI) is paid on behalf of children whose parents receive weekly social welfare payments due to unemployment, illness or disability.

Budget 2014:

- Maintained the QCI payment at its 2013 weekly rate of €29.80.

The cost of providing the QCI will decrease by 5% from €18.2 million to €17.2 million due to the reduced number of adults in receipt of qualifying social welfare payments.

Family Income Supplement

The Family Income Supplement (FIS) is a weekly tax-free payment available to employees (not self-employed) with children. It gives extra financial support to people on low pay and benefitted almost 41,000 families at the end of September 2013.

Budget 2014:

- Maintained the rate of FIS at its 2013 rate, which is based on 60% of the shortfall between net weekly family income and the applicable weekly family threshold.

The cost of providing the Family Income Supplement will increase by 23% from €229.6 million in 2013 to €281.7 million in 2014, due to an increase in the number of people in work on low pay eligible for FIS.

One Parent Family Payment

The One-Parent Family Payment (OPFP) is a payment for lone parents. Those in receipt of this payment must meet certain conditions, satisfy a means test and have attempted to get maintenance from the child's other parent. The upper age limit of children of new applicants from July 2013 is 10 and this will be reduced to seven years from July 2014.[32]

Budget 2014:

- Maintained the rate of the One Parent Family Payment at €188 per week.

The cost of providing the One Parent Family Payment will reduce by 7% from €934.7 million in 2013 to €873 million in 2014.

School Meals Programme

The School Meals Programme aims to provide regular and healthy food services for disadvantaged school children through the statutory Urban School Meals Scheme for primary schools; and the non-statutory School Meals Local Projects Scheme for primary schools, secondary schools and local groups and voluntary organisations which operate their own school meals projects. The aim is to allow Delivering Equality of Education in Schools (DEIS) schools that are not currently within the programme the opportunity to join and for schools currently benefiting, to update their programmes.

Budget 2014:

- Maintained funding for the School Meals Programme at €37 million, the same as in 2013.
- Committed to the provision of extra breakfast clubs to support school-going children in disadvantaged areas. No figures were provided in relation to the cost of this initiative or the number of children or schools that would benefit.[33] The Department of Social Protection, at its post-budget meeting, said that approximately 170 schools had been contacted about this initiative.

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[32] See: http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social_welfare/social_welfare_payments/social_welfare_payments_to_families_and_children/one_parent_family_payment.html

[33] For up to date information and figures related to the school meals' programme see Joan Burton TD, Minister for Social Protection, Parliamentary Questions: Written Answers, [42610/13], Dáil Debate, 9 October 2013, unrevised.

Primary Social Welfare Payments

Weekly primary social welfare payments – including Jobseekers' Allowance, Carers' Benefit and Farm Assist – are all maintained at their 2013 rates in Budget 2014. The rate and seasonal duration of fuel allowance are also maintained.

CUTS AND SAVINGS

Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance

The BSCFA helps meet the cost of uniforms and footwear for children going to school. In 2013, 173,860 families received the payment in respect of 323,500 children.[34] The scheme operates from June to September each year and is paid to parents in receipt of certain social welfare payments or payments for training, employment schemes or adult education, on behalf of children and young people between the ages of two and 22 years in education.

Budget 2014:

- Made no change to the BSCFA for children (under 18). It remains at €200 for children aged 12 years or more and €100 for children aged four to 11 years. These rates were reduced by €50 each (from €250 and €150 respectively in Budget 2013).
- Abolished the BSCFA for those over 18 years in third level education.

The cost of providing the BSCFA will reduce by 5% from €48.8 million to €46.3 million in 2014.

Maternity and Adoptive Benefit

Maternity Benefit and Adoptive Benefit are payments to women who are on leave from work who have just had or adopted a child. Both payments are covered by social insurance (PSRI).

Budget 2014:

- Standardised Maternity Benefit and Adoptive Benefit at a weekly rate of €230 for all new applicants. Previously the payment ranged from €217.80 (minimum rate) and €262 (maximum rate).
- This is in addition to measures taken in Budget 2013 to treat Maternity Benefit as taxable income.

The cost of providing Maternity Benefit will reduce by 13% from €297 million in 2013 to €258.5 million in 2014. The cost of providing Adoptive Benefit will reduce by 21% from €420,000 in 2013 to €330,000 in 2014.

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[34] Information provided to the Alliance by the Department of Social Protection on 23 October 2013.

Facts on Child Income Supports

Child Benefit

Paid to 607,437 families in respect of 1,159,624 children (October 2013)

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)

2012 rate: €140 per month for the first and second child (no change)

€148 per month for the third child (€19 monthly cut)

€160 per month for the fourth and subsequent children (€27 monthly cut)

2013 rate: €130 per month for the first and second child (€10 monthly cut)

€130 per month for the third child (€18 monthly cut)

€140 per month for the fourth and each subsequent child (€20 monthly cut)

2014 rate: €130 per month for all children

Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance

Paid to 173,860 families in respect of 323,500 children (October 2013)

2012 rate: €250 for children aged 12 years or more (reduced from €305)

€150 for children aged 4-11 years (reduced from €200)

2013 rate: €200 for children aged 12 years or more (reduced from €250)

€100 for children aged 4-11 years (reduced from €150)

2014 rate: €200 for children aged 12 years or more (unchanged)

€100 for children aged 4-11 years (unchanged)

Qualified Child Increase

Paid on behalf of 491,632 children (full rate = 363,967 half rate = 127,665) (October 2013)

2013 rate: full rate to 29.80 and half rate to €14.90

2011 rate: No change.

2012 rate: No change. Eligibility criteria for half rate QCI tightened.

2013 rate: No change.

2014 rate: No change.

Family Income Supplement

Paid to 40,939 families in respect of 91,271 children (October 2013)

2011 rate: No change.

2012 rate: No change. Eligibility criteria relating to carers' payments changed.

2013 rate: No change.

2014 rate: No change.

Number of Children Affected

Together, QCI and FIS support approximately 583,000 children. This leaves an estimated 577,000 children without any additional support from the State beyond the basic child benefit payment.

3.2 Education and Skills

The Department of Education and Skills was allocated an overall expenditure budget of €8.76 billion in 2014. This compares to an allocation of €8.93 billion in 2013. The budget consists of €8.22 billion in current expenditure (including €362 million from the National Training Fund) and €540 million in capital expenditure. Savings of €44 million will be made under Budget 2014 to adhere to the expenditure ceiling applied.

The Education vote (number 26) makes up 16% of all Government current spending.

SPENDING

Recruitment of new teachers

Budget 2014:

- Included funding for the recruitment of an additional 1,400 teachers in primary and post-primary schools in 2014 to meet rising pupil numbers as well as to provide necessary resource teaching for children with special educational needs. Approximately two thirds of new teachers will be mainstream classroom teachers, while one third will be resource teachers for students with special educational needs. This brings the total number of new teachers for 2013-2014 to 2,800.
- Maintained the pupil teacher ratio at its current rate of 28:1 at primary level and 19:1 at non-fee charging second level schools. The Delivering of Education in Schools (DEIS) school pupil teacher ratio is maintained 18.25: 1.

Book Rental Scheme

Book rental schemes in schools are intended to reduce the cost burden on parents with school-age children. The Department of Education and Skills estimates that book rental schemes can result in savings of up to 80% of the cost of school books.

Budget 2014:

- Provided €5 million from the proceeds of the sale of the National Lottery Licence to allow primary schools to invest in book rental schemes.
- Announced a €15 million investment over three years to support the establishment of book rental schemes in all primary schools that do not currently operate such a scheme.
- Committed to maintaining the €15 million already provided to schools currently operating book rental schemes. It is intended that this funding be used to maintain an updated stock of school books.
- Funds committed will be paid to schools in the form of a seed capital grant, with DEIS schools receiving €150 per child and €100 per child in non-DEIS schools, to set up book rental schemes.

Delivering Equality of Education in Schools (DEIS)

The DEIS programme is the key initiative employed by the Department of Education and Skills to address educational disadvantage. It has been operational since 2005.

Budget 2014:

- Ringfenced funding for the DEIS scheme, thus maintaining overall staffing and funding for disadvantaged schools.

Special Educational Needs

Budget 2014:

- Maintained annual funding for children with special educational needs at €1.3 billion.

Literacy and Numeracy, Junior Cycle Reform, High Speed Broadband and School Buildings

Fundng for a number of ongoing education-related strategies and programmes were announced in Budget 2014, including the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, Junior Cycle Reform, High Speed Broadband and School Buildings.

Budget 2014:

- Committed almost €9 million to the continued roll-out of the **National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy**. €6.5 million was allocated to the Strategy in 2013.
- Provided €4.8 million for the reform of the **Junior Cycle**. This funding will cover necessary training for school personnel including teachers and principals. The €4.8 million is in addition to the €1.5 million spent on preparing for the new English Syllabus (operational from September 2014). €3 million was allocated to Junior Cycle reform in 2013. It is unclear whether all of this was spent.
- Continued with the roll-out of **high-speed broadband** to second-level schools. 478 schools will be connected by the end of 2013, with the remaining 150 schools to be connected before the end of 2014. This is funded by an investment of €40 million by the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Communication, Energy and Natural Resources between 2011 and 2015.
- Allocated €470 million to **School Building** projects in 2014. Further details to be announced in November 2013. This is in addition to the €880 million spent since 2011, resulting in the delivery of 2,700 new classrooms for 66,000 children.

CUTS AND REFORMS

There is an overall reduction of 2% in spending on first, second and early years' education from €6.129 billion in 2013 to €5.978 billion in 2014. This cut is not allocated to a specific programme within children's education.

The €44 million of savings achieved by the Department will be made by:

- Reducing funding to third level institutions by €25 million, based on cash balances held by these institutions. This funding was to be restored to third level institutions in 2014 but is now delayed until 2015.
- Ending concurrent payments to participants on FÁS and Youthreach courses, who also receive a payment from the Department of Social Protection.
- Abolishing the long term unemployment bonus of €20 per week paid to FAS, VTOS and Youthreach recepients who have been out of work for more than 12 months. This payment is seen to have created inequity in the training system, whereby those out of work for 11 months are motivated to remain unemployed for another month and beyond to increase their payment. This change affects new entrants only.
- Requiring FAS apprentices to pay pro-rata student contribution towards their training, based on the time they spend studying at the Institutes of Technology. Student apprentices are paid during their training.

There is no mention of the capitation grant to schools across the Budget documentation, so it is assumed that this remains the same in 2014 at €176 for primary schools and €306 for second level schools.[35]

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[35] Department of Education and Skills, 'Minister Quinn Protects Frontline Education Services in Budget 2013' (Press Release) 5 December 2013 http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2012-Press-Releases/PR2012-12-05.html [accessed 16 October 2013].

3.3 Health

The overall Health budget for 2013 will be €13.66 billion, a reduction of €400 million bringing the overall budget back to 2012 levels. Health will make up 28% of all current Government expenditure in 2014, drawn from two votes: the Department of Health (vote number 38) and the HSE vote (vote number 39). Capital investment in health for 2014 is €397 million, unchanged from last year; while current spending accounts for the remaining €13.26 billion. A total of €666 million is required in savings by the Department of Health to meet its overall health expenditure ceiling reduction for 2014 (€361 million), its Programme for Government commitments (€57 million) and health service pressures (€248 million).

The impact of Budget 2014 on services will be addressed in the HSE's *National Service Plan 2014*, which will outline the level of health services to be delivered within the available funding and the measures required to fund unavoidable pressures and commitments made under the Programme for Government. The *National Service Plan 2014* is expected to be published by the Minister for Health in early 2013.

As discussed in Section 3.5 (below), excise duty on a pint of beer or cider is being increased by 10 cent, on a standard measure of spirits by 10 cent and on a 75cl bottle of wine by 50 cent, with pro-rata increases on other alcohol products. This adds to similar increases in Budget 2013. The price of 20 cigarettes will increase by 10 cents and roll-your-own tobacco will increase by 50 cents per 25 gram pack. Together, these measures are expected to bring in €160 million in a full year.

SPENDING

Free GP care for children aged five years and under

The Programme for Government commits to the phased introduction of Universal Health Insurance. Free GP care, introduced on a phased basis, is part of that process. This measure delivers healthcare close to people in their communities, at the lowest level of complexity and lowest level of cost.

Budget 2014:

- Provided €37 million for free GP care for children aged five years and under. This will allow the approximately 240,000 children aged five and under in Ireland access a GP service without paying a fee at the point of use. This figure is 57% of all children in the five and under age group, the other 43% are covered by a medical card or a GP visit card.
- Stated the requirement for primary legislation to allow for this scheme to be set up and fully implemented in 2014.

Mental Health

Budget 2014:

- Provided €20 million for mental health services in 2014, to be primarily used for community mental health teams, including child and adolescent mental health teams. This brings to €90 million the total figure ringfenced for mental health services since 2011. Some proportion of the 2014 budget allocation will also be allocated to suicide prevention initiatives.
- Stated that further detail will be provided in the *HSE National Service Plan 2014.*

Children's Hospital

Budget 2014:

- Re-confirmed the ringfencing of €200 million from the sale of the National Lottery Licence to finance the construction of the new National Children's Hospital.

CUTS AND SAVINGS

Medical Card

A number of changes are made to medical cards to generate required savings from the Department of Health; this was termed 'medical card probity' in the budget.

Budget 2014:

- Announced savings of €113 million in 2013 through 'improving the accuracy of the medical card system'. It is not clear which groups will be affected by this change.
- Changed income thresholds for those over 70 years old (savings in 2014: €25 million) and those returning to work having had a medical card (savings in 2014: €11 million). No other changes to the eligibility criteria for medical cards were announced.

Prescription charges

Currently, people with a medical card pay a prescription charge of €1.50 per item, subject to a monthly cap of €19.50 per month per person or family. This rate was increased from 50 cent per item and a monthly cap of €10 in Budget 2013.

Budget 2014:

- Increases the prescription charge rate to €2.50 per item with a monthly cap of €25.00 per person or family. This is expected to generate €43 million per annum and will take effect on 1 December 2013.

Charge on retailers for the sale of tobacco

Currently under Irish Tobacco Control Legislation a retailer wishing to sell tobacco products must register with the HSE and be placed on the Retail Register for the sale of tobacco products. Under the Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2002 as amended the HSE may charge a fee as may be determined by the Minister for Health. To date this has been a once-off fee of €50.

Budget 2014:

- Proposed to increase the 'Retail Register Fee' for selling tobacco in the context of legislation and in line with 'Tobacco Free Ireland', which was approved by Government in July 2013. This measure is expected to generate an additional €5 million.

Private patient charges in public hospitals

The Health (Amendment) Act 2013 introduced a new system of charges for private in-patients using public hospital facilities, which will take effect from 1 January 2014. Until now, private maintenance charges did not apply to about 40% of private in-patient bed-days in public hospitals. This represented a subsidy given by public hospitals to private health insurers.

Budget 2014:

- States that it will charge all private patients in public hospitals, generating an additional €30 million in 2014.

Health service staff numbers

A net reduction of 2,600 full-time equivalent staff has been targeted by the end of 2014. It will be a challenge for the health service to achieve this target while maintaining the necessary level of service.

Health Service Executive

HSE Child and Family Services

- The HSE's Children and Family Services budget has been reduced by €12 million to €534 million. This is a reduction of almost €20 million from the €551 million figure in Budget 2012. The Alliance understands that this reduction is down to the reorganisation of internal budgets. This funding line will be transferred to the new Child and Family Support Agency under the Department of Children and Youth Affairs when the new Agency is established in January 2014.

HSE Regions and other Health Agencies

Budget 2014 reduces the annual budget for the:

- HSE Dublin Mid Leinster region by 1% (on top of a 1% reduction in Budget 2013).
- HSE Dublin North East region by 1% (on top of a 2% reduction in Budget 2013).
- HSE South region by 1% (on top of a 1% reduction in Budget 2013).
- HSE West region by 1% (on top of a 2% reduction in Budget 2013).

It is not clear from the Budget documentation what impact this cut will have on services. It is expected that this will be outlined in the *HSE National Service Plan 2014*.

3.4 Children and Youth Affairs

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs was established on 2 June 2011. It has its own vote, vote 40, and a budget of €451 million in Budget 2013, an increase of €6 million from Budget 2013. This will comprise €416 million in current expenditure and €35 million in capital expenditure. The Department accounts for less than 1% of total current Government expenditure in 2014.

Budget 2014 provided €534 million to the HSE's Children and Family Services programme – a reduction of €12 million on last year's allocation and of €17 million over two years. This funding line will be transferred to the new Child and Family Support Agency under the Department of Children and Youth Affairs when the new Agency is established in January 2014.

SPENDING

Reforming Child Protection

The new Child and Family Agency will be established in January 2014. The Agency was a key Programme for Government commitment, made in response to the historic legacy of failings brought to light in numerous statutory enquiries and the increased demand in child protection referrals. The Agency is a once in a lifetime chance to improve the quality and capacity of child protection, family support and welfare services. The budget of the HSE Children and Family Services (approximately €534 million) will transfer in full to the new Agency, along with the budgets of the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) and the Family Support Agency (FSA).

Budget 2014:

- Provided additional funding of €6.7 million (€12 million in a full year) to support the programme of reform for child welfare and protection services, which will be implemented by the new Agency next year. This funding will be provided on establishment of the new Agency.

Implementing the Pre-School Quality Agenda

The Pre-School Quality Agenda is an 8-point plan to improve pre-school quality standards, announced in summer 2013.

Budget 2014:

- Allocated €4.5 million to support implementation of the Pre-School Quality Agenda, this will include:
  - €1.1 million for recruitment of additional staff to the Pre-School Inspectorate, housed in the new Child and Family Agency to address gaps that currently exist in the pre-school system.
  - €2.5 million for a new mentoring service for pre-school services, which will employ graduates in early childhood care and education to work directly with services to improve quality including assisting services to implement the Siolta framework and Aistear curriculum for 0 to 6 years.
  - €1.5 million for training support to assist existing staff in the sector to meet the new qualification requirements being introduced in September 2015.

Childcare programmes

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs operates a number of childcare programmes including the universal free pre-school year and other targeted childcare supports for low-income parents.

Budget 2014:

- Allocated €260 million to all childcare programmes operated by the Department. This will allow for the continued implementation of the universal free pre-school year for 68,000 children in 2014 and the continued subvention of an additional 35,000 childcare places.

After-School Childcare Scheme

In 2013, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs worked in conjunction with the Department of Social Protection to pilot the After-School Childcare Scheme to support labour activation, announced in Budget 2013 and allocated €14 million for over 6,000 after school places. This scheme made childcare places available to low-income parents of primary school children. Take-up of the scheme has been lower than expected to date, therefore additional funds will be used in 2014 to support the Quality Agenda for Pre-School Services and introduce additional childcare supports targeted at participants in Community Employment (CE) schemes. The details of the new scheme will be finalised by both Departments in the coming months with a view to its introduction in early 2014. The After-School Childcare Scheme will continue to be implemented.

National Children Detention Facility

In 2012, the Government announced its decision to end the practice of detaining 16 and 17 year olds in St. Patrick's Institution through developing the Oberstown facility to accommodate this age group. In 2013, €20.4 million was allocated in capital funding to the National Children Detention Facility project in Oberstown. Also in 2013, €50 million in capital funding was allocated over three years to end the detention of 16 and 17 year old boys in St. Patrick's Institution and undertake construction of a the National Children Detention Facility Project at Oberstown. This will include six new detention units and associated education and training facilities.[36] The first residential detention places will be delivered in the third quarter of 2014 and the project is expected to be fully completed in 2015.

Budget 2014:

- Allocated €31 million of capital funding to enable the National Children Detention Facility project in Oberstown to proceed. This will contribute to the overall project cost, currently estimated at €56.4 million (including VAT).

Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme

The Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme, previously named the 'Area-based Approach to Child Poverty Initiative', was established in 2013 to build on and continue the work of the Prevention and Early Intervention Programme (PEIP) which supported projects in Tallaght, Ballymun, Darndale Belcamp and Moatview. The programme will implement prevention and early intervention supports for children and families in areas of high disadvantage focusing on literacy, speech and language, parenting, health and pro-social behaviour. Its aim is to break the cycle of child poverty where it is most deeply entrenched and improve outcomes for children and families.

Budget 2014:

- Provided €1.5 million in funding for the ABC programme, bringing the State funding to be invested in this in 2014 to €4 million. A further €5 million will be invested by Atlantic Philanthropies.

Youth Programmes

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs provides a range of youth programmes and services, including Youth Cafés and Youth Work to 400,000 young people.

Budget 2014:

- Provided an extra €1 million to youth programmes and services. This figure is a scaling back of reductions to youth work services planned for 2014 and outlined in the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure.

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[36] Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 'Minister Fitzgerald to End Detention of 16 and 17 Year Olds in St. Patrick's Institution' [press release], 2 April 2012, http://www.dcya.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?DocID=1842.

CUTS AND SAVINGS

Youth Programmes

Budget 2014:

- Made reductions in funding across various youth programmes to the value of €2 million. This saving is separate to the €1 million scaled back from the savings outlined by the Comprehensive Spending Review and outlined above.

School Completion Programme

This programme aims to increase the number of young people staying in primary and second-level schools. It forms part of the Department of Education and Skills DEIS programme.

Budget 2014:

- Made savings of €1.7 million on the school completion programme by reducing spending by 6.5% per annum on the previous year's level of funding. This is in addition to the €1.8 million saved for the same reason in Budget 2013.

National Longitudinal Study

Growing Up in Ireland: The National Longitudinal Study on Children follows the progress of almost 20,000 children across Ireland to collect information to improve the understanding of all aspects of children and their development.

Budget 2014:

- Reduced spending on *Growing Up in Ireland* by €1 million due to a reduction in commitments under existing contracts and the focus in 2014 on desk, rather than field research, which has a lower cost implication. This is in addition to the €0.5 million saved for the same reason in Budget 2013.

National Children's Strategy

Budget 2014:

- Reduced spending on the National Children's Strategy by €0.4 million in 2014 due to a reduction in commitments under existing contracts. This is in addition to the €0.3 million saved for the same reason in Budget 2013.

Early Intervention Programme

The Early Intervention Programme examines innovative methods for improving outcomes for children in disadvantaged areas.

Budget 2014:

- Reduced spending on the programme by €0.8 million due to a reduction in commitments under existing contracts. The work done under this programme will now be incorporated into the Area Based Childhood (ABC) programme. This is in addition to the €0.8 million saved for the same reason in Budget 2013.

Family Support Agency

Budget 2014:

Reduced spending on the Family Support Agency by €2.1 million based on savings in administration and programme costs. This is in addition to the €3.5 million made through 'Agency' savings in Budget 2013.

3.5 Additional Departments

Department of Justice and Equality

- €1.34 billion allocated to the Garda Siochana for ongoing maintenance of national security, detection and prevention of crime, ensuring safe communities and effective delivery of the roads' policing programme.
- Announcement that recruitment of Gardai will begin again in 2014. This will be the first cohort of student Gardai to enter Templemore Garda Training College since the freeze on recruitment in 2009.

Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources

- Roll out of 100Mps Broadband in 260 schools throughout 2014 as part of the shared policy agenda with the Department of Education and Skills, outlined in section 3.2 above.

Department of Environment, Community and Local Government

- €79 million allocated to housing regeneration, with a significant focus on major regenerations in Ballymun and Limerick to be completed in 2014. 185 new housing units will be delivered under the social housing investment programme.
- €48 million provided for the Local and Community Development Programme with a focus on supporting people into education and training, to increase their work-readiness.
- €150,000 provided to Irish Water Safety to support a strategy to counter the increased number of drownings.
- Discussion in relation to local government reform and the allocation of revenues raised via the local property tax will take place in 2014 and influence future funding available to this Department.
- 175 new housing units for people with special needs will be developed and up to 150 new leased units will be delivered to cater specifically for people with disabilities leaving institutional care.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

- Ireland's membership of the UN Human Rights Council will "continue as a major focus of activity in 2014. Ireland's election to the Council in the face of strong competition was a major achievement and has been availed of already to promote successfully a number of resolutions in the areas of child mortality and civil society".
- Allocation of funding for "international peace, security and human rights" was increased by 5% from €70.7 million to €74.1 million.

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Group of Votes

- A 'shared services' vote has now been set up. Progress has been made on consolidating a number of administrative functions across the Civil Service in areas including finance, IT and human resources.
- The new Office of Public Procurement (under a new vote) will centralise the procurement of common goods and services including ICT, fleet and professional services.

Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport

- A reduction of 8% in overall funding for "sport and recreational services" from €74.6 million to €68.9 million.
- €3.1 million cut in funding for the Irish Sports Council.
- €0.9 million reduction in funding for the Rural Transport Programme, in line with recommendations for the Value for Money Review. It is intended to restructure the programme to negate the impact of reduced funding.

- Announcement of two major capital projects: a National Indoor Arena and a National Sports Campus and the funding of a new round of Sports Capital Grants, to be funded using €200 million invested from the sale of the National Lottery Licence.

Department of Finance (including Office of the Revenue Commissioner)

- The One-Parent Family Tax Credit is to be replaced with a new Single Person Child Carer Tax Credit from 1 January 2014. The new credit but as announced in the Budget it will be to the same value but will be available only to the principal carer of the child rather than both parents. This means that in a family where the primary carer is not working, the tax credit may not be transferred to the working parent even where there are joint custody arrangements. It is expected to generate savings of €18 million in 2014 and €25 million in a full year.
- Tax relief for medical insurance premiums will be restricted to the first €1,000 per adult insured and the first €500 per child insured taking effect on 16 October 2013. The Health Insurance Authority estimates that 1.4 million policy holders could face an increase of €100 a year.
- Excise duties on both alcohol and cigarettes have been increased with the intention of generating an additional €165 million per year.

Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

- Reduction of approximately €16.9 million (7%) in exchequer funding to the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, offset by new funding for three jobs-rich initiatives – Limerick National City of Culture, for Decade of Centenaries 1912 - 1922, and works on heritage buildings – totalling €17 million.
- €115 million for Arts, Culture and Film (a reduction of 8%), including €56m for the Arts Council and €14 million for the Irish Film Board.
- €44.8 million for the conservation and protection of Ireland's built and natural heritage.
- €39.8 million for the Irish Language, the Gaeltacht and the Islands. Of this €0.5 million is a dedicated new fund to kick-start the implementation of the 20-year strategy for Irish, in line with the Gaeltacht Act 2012.

APPENDIX 1 – Extract from Alliance 2014 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 are available on our website www.childrensrights.ie.

The Alliance urges the Minister for Social Protection to consider the effect of her budgetary decisions will have on the child's right to grow up free from poverty; the impact of those decisions on the increasing number of children growing up poor in Ireland; and how she can limit the already devastating impact of the recession on children and their families. There is a moral and legal obligation on the Government to deliver a children's rights-budget, protecting children from the impact of further cuts to vital supports and services.

The Alliance believes that a children's rights-budget can be achieved by the following actions:

- Proof all Budget 2014 proposals for their impact on children's rights in advance of budgetary decision-making, with a particular focus on poverty proofing.
- Reform the Child Income Support system: retain a universal approach to Child Benefit payments, introduce a second-tier child income support system for low income families, and maintain additional and adequate supports for low income families in work.
- Maintain Child Benefit at its current level unless it is reformed in a manner that retains a universal payment and provides additional supports to low income families.
- Maintain Family Income Supplement or introducing an adequate alternative – and support its increased uptake – to support families with children in low paid work.
- Retain the real value of the Qualified Child Increase in Budget 2014 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.
- Restore the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance to the 2012 rate, to begin to reverse the regressive cuts in Budgets 2012 and 2013.
- Avoid any cuts to existing child and family services and produce clear proposals for the redirection of resources to ensure better services and better outcomes for children including adequate resource allocation to the soon-to-be-established Child and Family Agency.
- Adopt a national sub-target on child poverty as recommended by the European Commission Recommendation's "Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage".

State Obligation to Children in Tough Economic Times

The statistics on child poverty in Ireland are stark and show a substantial decline in the welfare and standard of living of children in recent years.[37] The Department of Social Protection's own research shows that households worst affected by the main welfare and direct tax measures of Budget 2013 were those with children, particularly lone parent families.[38] Employed lone parents suffered the most, with a loss of 1.4% in their average income.[39] Other households with high losses include non-earning couples with children (loss of 1.3%); non-earning lone parents (loss of 1.2%); dual earner couples with children (loss of 1 to 1.2%); and single earner couples with children (loss of 1.2%).[40]

[37] CSO; EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2011 & revised 2010 results http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/silc/2011/silc_2011.pdf

[38] Department of Social Protection, 'Social impact assessment of the main welfare and direct tax measures in Budget 2013' March 2013, p. 1.

[39] *Ibid*., p. 8

[40] *Ibid*. p. 8.

> "… Ireland's human rights obligations apply even during times of economic hardship, and […] recovery measures must not disproportionately impact the poorest segments of society […]. The State must comply with these obligations to the maximum extent of its available resources (art. 4), even during times of economic hardship."
>
> UN Independent Expert on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty, 2011[41]

Child poverty is not just a charitable issue; it is a human rights issue.[42] In ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Ireland undertook to implement its provisions. Under the Convention, Ireland has an obligation to undertake targeted measures to move as expeditiously and effectively as possible towards the full realisation of the economic and social rights of children. This is particularly true in times of economic hardship and such crises cannot be used as a reason to postpone the State's obligations and actions to tackle child poverty.[43] The UN Independent Expert on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty reiterated this point on her trip to Ireland in 2011.[44] Despite this, the Government continues to cut socio-economic rights-related programmes and services, asserting that it is justifiable to bring about economic recovery.

Under Article 4 of the Convention, Ireland is obliged to undertake measures to implement the Convention rights to the maximum extent of available resources. The Child Benefit payment is the State's universal income mechanism for supporting all parents with their child rearing duties. This is in line with Article 18 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which obliges states to support parents and legal guardians in caring and providing for their children.

Cuts to Child Benefit in four consecutive budgets have reduced monthly child income supports by almost €100 for families with three or more children. The failure in Budgets 2011, 2012 and 2013 to compensate those on the lowest incomes for these cuts interferes with a child's right to an adequate standard of living under Article 27 of the Convention.

The year-on-year cuts to the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance, the only payment dedicated to supporting low-income parents with the cost of school, will hinder children from fulfilling their right to education under Article 28, and their right not to be poor.

Measures taken in Budget 2013 were, again, damaging to children and families. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child is clear that, even in a crisis, it is not permissible to take steps that disproportionately impact on vulnerable groups, including children. Budget 2014 must take into account the cumulative effects of previous cuts, the identified priorities for children's welfare and development and be cognisant of the potential impact of any further cuts from this and other departments that impact on children and their families.

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41 United Nations Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty, Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona – Mission to Ireland*, 17 May 2011, UN Doc: A/HRC/17/34/Add.2

42 Article 27, Right to an adequate standard of living, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

43 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Day of General Discussion on "Resources for the Rights of the Child – Responsibility of States". September 2007, para. 48.

44 United Nations Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty, Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona – Mission to Ireland*, Ibid.

APPENDIX 2 – Alliance Post Budget Statement

Tuesday 15 October: Statement by Tanya Ward, Chief Executive

Children escape most austerity cuts in Budget 2014 but Maternity Benefit cut is anti-Family

The Children's Rights Alliance reacted to today's budget by welcoming the fact that children escape from most austerity cuts.

The Alliance welcomes:
- free GP care for under 5 year olds.
- that child benefit is to be maintained.
- additional funding of €6.7 million for the new Child and Family Agency.
- an allocation of €2 million for increased staff for Garda vetting.
- an allocation of €5 million towards subsidising the Book Rental Scheme .

The Alliance expressed unease and disappointment at:
- a reduction of 12% in maternity benefit.
- no restoration of the Back to School and Footwear Allowance to original levels.
- a lack of clarity on the HSE budgetary deficit being carried under the heading of Children and Family Services.

Tanya Ward, Chief Executive of the Alliance said:

"The Government should be recognised for maintaining Child Benefit and the introduction of a new universal system of free GP care for young children. Families simply could not have coped if Child Benefit was further cut. Assistance with GP costs will help struggling families keep their heads above water.

But no one in the country would want free GP care for the very young at the expense of the medical card being withdrawn from children with high level health needs. We would be very concerned that the Government intends to save €113 million from the medical card scheme. Who will be left out in the cold with this proposal?

The emphasis on child protection in this Budget is equally to be applauded as the State tries to undo a legacy of failure by trying to live up to our responsibilities to the youngest among us. However, new mothers and young people will have reason to be disappointed.

Ireland is currently in the middle of a 'baby boom' and to reduce maternity benefit at this time is counter-productive economically, counter intuitive and will result in discouraging people from having babies. It will inevitably force mothers back to work earlier and interfere with breastfeeding arrangements."

Ends

Uniting Voices for Children

The Children's Rights Alliance is a coalition of over 100 organisations working to secure the rights of children in Ireland, by campaigning for the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. We aim to improve the lives of all children under 18 years, through securing the necessary changes in Ireland's laws, policies and services.

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