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**Right to
an Adequate
Standard
of Living**



Every child has the right to a standard of living that is adequate to their development – physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social. While parents and guardians have the primary responsibility to provide for the child’s material needs, the State also has the responsibility to assist parents and guardians to alleviate poverty where needed.

Summary of Article 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Chapter Grade:

D+



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10,000 people homeless 4,000 of these are children
This doesn't even account for the number of people suffering from hidden homelessness or the many thousands living in fear of losing their home Housing is a #HumanRight #Homelessness #Equality #Right2aHome



2.1 Child and Family Homelessness

Section Grade:

F

➔ Government Commitment

A Programme for a Partnership Government commits to:

End the use of unsuitable long-term emergency accommodation for homeless families in part by providing 500 rapid-delivery housing units.

▶ **Progress: Limited**

'Child and Family Homelessness' receives an 'F' grade in *Report Card 2019*, a drop from last year's 'E' grade. This grade reflects the deteriorating housing crisis with almost 10,000 people living in emergency or temporary accommodation. Nearly 4,000 children are experiencing homelessness which is having a detrimental impact on their health, wellbeing, education and relationships. Family hubs are being heavily relied upon in the absence of affordable and social housing. The Rapid Build Programme has delivered fewer than 350 homes out of a planned 1,500 in almost three years of operation.

Every child has the right to an adequate standard of living for his or her physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.¹²⁴ The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires the State to assist parents and guardians who are in need by providing 'material assistance and support programmes particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing'.¹²⁵ The right to adequate housing is defined as being accessible, habitable and affordable with certain 'facilities essential for health, security, comfort and nutrition'.¹²⁶ Households should have legal security of tenure¹²⁷ and States must take steps to prevent illegal evictions.¹²⁸ The right to housing also means that

124 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (20 November 1989) 1577 UNTS 3 (UNCRC) Art 27.

125 *ibid* Art 27(3).

126 UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 'General Comment No. 4 on the Right to Adequate Housing (Art 11(1) of the Covenant)' (1991) UN Doc E/1992/23 para 8(b).

127 *ibid* para 8(b).

128 *ibid* para 8(e).

States must 'progressively and to the extent allowed by their available resources, prevent and address homelessness; provide the physical infrastructure required for housing to be considered adequate... or ensure adequate housing to individuals or groups unable, for reasons beyond their control, to enjoy the right to adequate housing, notably through housing subsidies and other measures'.¹²⁹ In 2016, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed its concern at families with children 'facing significant delays in accessing social housing and frequently living in inappropriate, temporary or emergency accommodation on a long-term basis'.¹³⁰ Children as a priority group must be 'accorded full and sustainable access to adequate housing resources'.¹³¹ The UN Committee has called on the State to undertake measures to increase the availability of social housing and emergency housing support.¹³²

► Homeless families:

The number of families with children experiencing homelessness exceeded record numbers in 2018 with 1,728 families with 3,811 children living in emergency homeless accommodation in November 2018, the majority in Dublin.¹³³ Child and family homelessness outside Dublin has continued to increase as in November 2018, 432 families with 995 children were in emergency accommodation, up from 342 families with 800 children in November 2017.¹³⁴ Young parents aged 18 to 24 years make up 20 to 25 per cent of families in Dublin experiencing homelessness; nine per cent of them moved straight from their family home of origin into emergency accommodation with their children.¹³⁵

Lone parent families represent 60 per cent of the total number of families living in emergency

Children homeless outside Dublin



Source: Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Homelessness Report, November 2018.

accommodation.¹³⁶ In November 2018, children comprised more than one third of the overall homeless population (38 per cent).¹³⁷ While no official figures exist on the number of cases of hidden homelessness in June 2018, almost 20 per cent of the 72,000 households on the social housing waiting list are people living with their parents and a further eight per cent live with family or friends.¹³⁸ However, it is likely that the number of people experiencing hidden homelessness is higher.

In March and April 2018, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) removed 635 adults and 931 children from the monthly homelessness statistics as it contends that they were incorrectly categorised as they were not accommodated in emergency accommodation.¹³⁹ Instead they were accommodated in houses and apartments owned or leased by local authorities or approved housing bodies.¹⁴⁰ These properties

129 UN Habitat, 'Factsheet No. 21 (Rev.1): The Right to Adequate Housing' (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2014) 34.

130 UNCRC 'Concluding Observations: Ireland' (2016) UN Doc CRC/C/IRL/CO/3-4 para 61.

131 UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 'General Comment No. 4 on the Right to Adequate Housing (Art 11(1) of the Covenant)' (1991) UN Doc E/1992/23 para 8(e).

132 UNCRC 'Concluding Observations: Ireland' (2016) UN Doc CRC/C/IRL/CO/3-4 para 62.

133 DHPLG, 'Homelessness Report November 2018' <<https://bit.ly/2Vq0x08>> accessed 11 January 2019.

134 *ibid.*

135 Dr Sharon Lambert, Daniel O'Callaghan and Owen Jump, *Young Families in the Homeless Crisis: Challenges and Solutions*, (Focus Ireland 2018) 1.

136 DHPLG, 'Homelessness Report November 2018' <<https://bit.ly/2Vq0x08>> accessed 11 January 2019.

137 *ibid.*

138 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DHPLG, 8 January 2019.

139 *ibid.*

140 DHPLG 'Categorisation of Emergency Accommodation in Monthly Homeless Reports' <<https://bit.ly/2Tlzk73>> accessed 11 January 2019.

are transitional in nature with the aim of the family moving from the accommodation within 18 months into a rented property or social housing.

The deadline set out in *Rebuilding Ireland: An Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness* to use 'emergency hotel and B&B type accommodation for families' only 'in limited circumstances' by mid-2017¹⁴¹ has not been met. In the third quarter of 2018, 3,362 adults were recorded as being resident in emergency accommodation for more than six months.¹⁴² In the first half of 2018, 2,332 adults moved into independent tenancies.¹⁴³ A new system, to replace the current homeless case management system, is in development and aims to record more detailed information including the number of children exiting homelessness.¹⁴⁴ In the interim revised reporting systems will be in place.¹⁴⁵ This is welcome as the number of children experiencing homelessness continues to rise it is imperative that the DHPLG track the number of children who exit homelessness.

Despite the commencement of legislation to protect tenants in January 2017,¹⁴⁶ high rents, lack of security of tenure and overall lack of housing supply, particularly properties falling within stated rent limits for the purposes of Rent Supplement or Housing Assistance Payment (HAP),¹⁴⁷ have fuelled the crisis. In June 2018, 52 per cent of families presented to homeless services in Dublin due 'to a loss of or inability to secure private rented accommodation'.¹⁴⁸ Dublin Regional Homeless Executive (DRHE) has noted that the reasons why people experience homelessness changed over the course of 2018 from relationship breakdown, family issues or overcrowding to lack of access to the private rented sector.¹⁴⁹

By July 2017, the roll-out of family supported accommodation facilities or 'family hubs'¹⁵⁰ began as a way of transitioning families out of unsuitable emergency hotel and B&B accommodation to provide 'a greater level of stability than is possible in hotel accommodation'.¹⁵¹ At the beginning of 2019 there were 26 hubs in operation nationwide with capacity to accommodate 600 families.¹⁵² A facility to cater for six women with newborn babies has opened in Dublin and there are plans to refurbish another.¹⁵³ The length of stay in family hubs is currently not captured.¹⁵⁴ The Department has acknowledged that it may not be possible to facilitate the exit of some families within the six month target depending on their requirements or preferences.¹⁵⁵

In the first nine months of 2018, housing authorities spent €14.8 million on the operation of the family hub programme. To date, capital funding for the development of additional family hubs was estimated at €45 million and a significant proportion of the €60 million allocated to homeless services in Budget 2019 will be assigned to the hubs programme.¹⁵⁶ Hubs may represent a more suitable alternative to hotel and B&B accommodation but they remain a temporary short-term solution and the scale of investment in these hubs is misplaced. More sustainable solutions are needed to provide families with a place to call home.

In September 2017, Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, Eoghan Murphy TD established a Homeless Inter-Agency Group to provide a more coherent and coordinated approach to the State's response to homelessness.¹⁵⁷ At the January 2018 Housing Summit, the Minister requested that local authorities work with families to prevent homelessness

141 Government of Ireland, *Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness*, (Government of Ireland 2016) 13.

142 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DHPLG, 8 January 2019.

143 Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government, *Housing (Homeless Families) Bill 2017: Discussion*, 3 October 2018.

144 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DHPLG, 8 January 2019.

145 *ibid.*

146 Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016.

147 Simon Communities in Ireland, *Locked Out of the Market XII: The Gap between Rent Supplement/HAP and Market Rents*, (Simon Communities in Ireland 2018).

148 Dublin Region Homeless Executive, *DRHE Quarterly Activity Report* (DRHE 2018) 6.

149 Homeless Inter-Agency Group, *Report to Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government* (Homeless Inter-Agency Group 2018) 3.

150 Olivia Kelly, 'Family hub centres to open at 19 sites in Dublin', *The Irish Times*, 25 July 2017.

151 *Rebuilding Ireland, Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness: Third Quarterly Progress Report* (DHPLG 2017) 60.

152 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DHPLG, 8 January 2019. There are 22 family hubs in Dublin with one in Cork, Kildare, Louth and Limerick.

153 *ibid.*

154 *ibid.*

155 *ibid.*

156 *ibid.*

157 Homeless Inter-Agency Group, *Report to Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government* (Homeless Inter-Agency Group 2018) 18. The Group includes membership from the County and City Management Association; Department of Children and Youth Affairs; Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection; Department of Health; Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government; Department of Justice and Equality; Department of Public Expenditure and Reform; Dublin Region Homeless Executive; Health Service Executive; and TUSLA, the Child and Family Agency.

and develop more family hubs.¹⁵⁸ The *Housing First National Implementation Plan 2018-2021*, published in September 2018, is designed to focus on individual adults who are long-term homeless rather than families with children.¹⁵⁹ It contains a section on preventing young people from entering homelessness by implementing a streamlined approach with housing bodies and homeless services to ensure a more rapid response time to meet the housing needs of young care leavers.¹⁶⁰

The Homeless Inter-Agency Group met seven times in the first half of 2018 to consider a range of issues on policy formulation and delivering services and published its first report in June 2018.¹⁶¹ It continues to meet on a bi-monthly basis.¹⁶² In order to address family and child homelessness, the Group recommended the continued development of family hubs to minimise the use of hotels and B&Bs and called for stronger regulation of the rental sector.¹⁶³ Many families in homeless services cited difficulties with the private rented sector and thus were reluctant to accept HAP instead preferring to wait for local authority housing due to the greater stability and security of tenure.¹⁶⁴ The Group called for a review and update of the Joint Protocol relating to the accommodation needs of young care leavers who are particularly vulnerable to homelessness.¹⁶⁵ The cross-departmental approach to homelessness is welcome but the Interagency Group should be expanded to include the Department of Education and Skills which has responsibility for policy formation in relation to the education of school-age children experiencing homelessness.

In 2018, the Children's Rights Alliance commissioned a report on the educational needs of children

experiencing homelessness.¹⁶⁶ Children living in some emergency accommodation facilities (including family hubs) could not access and participate fully in school due to the inability to meet a child's fundamental requirements such as food, adequate rest and physical health.¹⁶⁷ Children at times experienced poor physical health and mental well-being, irritability, exhaustion, low self-esteem and feelings of social isolation which in turn impacted on their school attendance and resulted in reduced engagement and participation in school life and learning.¹⁶⁸ While living in emergency accommodation impacted negatively on some children's grades, the study found that educational settings are sources of predictability and comfort, where consistent routines and responsive teachers could offer children a sense of stability and continuity amid the uncertainty of family homelessness.¹⁶⁹ It also found that emergency homeless accommodation can impact 'negatively on families' daily food habits and dietary quality, not only in terms of what is consumed but also in how they prepared and ate their food'.¹⁷⁰

Budget 2019 allocated almost €2.4 billion to the DHPLG with a commitment to meet the housing needs of 27,400 households in 2019 through build, acquisition, long-term leasing, HAP and RAS.¹⁷¹ However, investment in affordable and social housing is essential to provide people with long-term and sustainable homes. Moreover, this would help ensure that children do not spend long periods living in inappropriate accommodation without access to their own space to play and learn. A minimum of 81,118 homes will be required between 2016 and 2020 to keep up with demographic changes although this figure does not include 'pent-up demand' resulting from the current crisis and will not alleviate the situation of almost 72,000 households currently awaiting social housing or assistance.¹⁷² While

158 DHPLG, Statement by Eoghan Murphy TD, 'Statement by Eoghan Murphy following Second Housing Summit with Local Authority Chief Executives', <<https://bit.ly/2PE6bfP>> accessed 18 January 2019.

159 Rebuilding Ireland, Minister Murphy and Minister Harris Launch Housing First National Implementation Plan (Rebuilding Ireland 2018) <<https://bit.ly/2DPI9cq>> accessed 8 November 2018.

160 DRHE, *First National Implementation Plan for 2018-2021* (DRHE 2018) 50.

161 Homeless Inter-Agency Group, *Report to Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government* (Homeless Inter-Agency Group 2018) 5.

162 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DHPLG, 8 January 2019.

163 Homeless Inter-Agency Group, *Report to Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government* (Homeless Inter-Agency Group 2018) 36-37.

164 *ibid* 18.

165 *ibid* 39.

166 Dr Geraldine Scanlon & Grainne McKenna, *Home Works: A Study on the Educational Needs of Children Experiencing Homelessness and Living in Emergency Accommodation Executive Summary* (Children's Rights Alliance 2018). Research was conducted with 20 parents with 38 children and 46 educational professionals.

167 *ibid* 5.

168 *ibid*.

169 *ibid* 6.

170 *ibid* 13. Dr Geraldine Scanlon & Grainne McKenna, *Home Works: A Study on the Educational Needs of Children Experiencing Homelessness and Living in Emergency Accommodation* (Children's Rights Alliance 2018) 26.

171 DHPLG, 'Murphy welcomes increase of €725m in Housing, Planning and Local Government funding (+22%) under Budget 2019' <<https://bit.ly/2FyEIH3>> accessed 8 November 2018.

172 Housing Agency, National Statement of Housing Supply and Demand 2016 and Outlook for 2017-18, (Housing Agency, 2017) 4.

social housing alone cannot solve the crisis, and while the State can use a mix of public and private measures to provide housing,¹⁷³ at least 10,000 social housing units should be delivered each year and more must be done to utilise vacant dwellings and encourage construction of affordable housing.

► National Quality Standards Framework:

The National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) for Homeless Services, developed by the DRHE in 2015 in consultation with stakeholders,¹⁷⁴ is welcome. Standards should ensure improved quality and consistency in emergency accommodation as well as ensuring that residents can hold providers to account for substandard conditions.

In total 20 pilot projects were implemented in three phases.¹⁷⁵ The NQSF has both a qualitative and quantitative element consisting of a Quality Improvement Workbook and measuring Key Performance Indicators. The workbook consists of eight themes, four focused on service user outcomes and four on service development.¹⁷⁶ The inclusion of child-specific standards for homeless services is welcome as these could help ensure that children are considered in the running of services which have been designed primarily to accommodate adults. The NQSF provides that children will receive age-appropriate information on their rights and that their needs will inform wider planning decisions for their family.¹⁷⁷ The Standards provide for children's rights to be facilitated and where they are not, a child-friendly complaints mechanism is available.¹⁷⁸ Service providers will also have to undertake a risk assessment for children in their service.¹⁷⁹ The NQSF sets out the minimum standards and legal requirements for dealing with child protection and child safety issues as well as the supports to be provided.¹⁸⁰ Feedback

to the Department from organisations using the NQSF has been positive as it has provided space for reflection and improvement.¹⁸¹ The DHPLG intends to conduct a review of the NQSF with all stakeholders before the framework is fully implemented.¹⁸²

Dublin Fire Brigade and Environmental Health Officers from Dublin City Council inspect homeless services;¹⁸³ no national independent inspectorate exists. The progress on standards is welcome but an independent inspectorate is necessary to monitor compliance and hold services accountable if they do not meet required standards.

► Rapid-delivery housing units:

The temporary rapid build scheme initiated in 2016 has been slow to progress but has been superseded by the roll-out of the family hub programme to provide 'emergency accommodation more suited to the needs of families'.¹⁸⁴ *Rebuilding Ireland* set a target to deliver 1,500 rapid build homes.¹⁸⁵ However, since 2016, a total of 325 social housing homes have been delivered under the rapid build mechanism, 117 of these in 2018.¹⁸⁶ A further 93 were planned for the last quarter of 2018 and 270 planned for 2019.¹⁸⁷ In September 2018, Dublin City Council issued a tender for €1 billion for the construction of rapid build homes.¹⁸⁸ Over 1,000 fast-track apartments will be built mostly in Dublin but also in other cities and towns.¹⁸⁹ The procurement process is underway and it is intended that construction will start in 2019.¹⁹⁰

173 UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 'General Comment No. 4 on the Right to Adequate Housing (Art 11(1) of the Covenant)' (1991) UN Doc E/1992/23 para 14.

174 Information provided by the Dublin Region Homeless Executive at a meeting with the Reception and Integration Agency, 13 October 2017.

175 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DHPLG, 8 January 2019. Twelve in Dublin, four in the Midlands, two in the South West region and two in the North East.

176 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DRHE, 21 December 2018.

177 DRHE, *National Quality Standards Framework for Homeless Services in Ireland: Quality Assessment & Improvement Workbook*, (DRHE 2018) 11.

178 *ibid* 17.

179 *ibid* 47.

180 *ibid* 93.

181 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DHPLG, 8 January 2019.

182 *ibid*.

183 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DRHE, 21 December 2018.

184 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DHPLG, 4 December 2017.

185 Government of Ireland, *Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness*, (Government of Ireland 2016) 17.

186 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DHPLG, 8 January 2019.

187 *ibid*.

188 Brian Hutton, 'New €1 bn Social Housing Project in Dublin is put out to Tender' *The Irish Times*, 5 September 2018.

189 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DHPLG, 8 January 2019.

190 *ibid*.

Child and Family Homelessness

Immediate Actions for 2019



As proposed in *Report Card 2018*, declare a housing emergency and commit to taking all feasible measures to address the shortage of housing, and the lack of affordability and security being experienced by so many households in Ireland.

Ensure that families are provided with the necessary financial and material supports to enable them to remain in their homes, increase security of tenure and ensure that children are not forced to live in unsafe and unsuitable conditions. Redirect funding from family hubs into longer-term sustainable solutions.



Commit to the principle that long-term social housing need will be met through social housing provided by local authorities, voluntary housing bodies or some other new not-for-profit entities.

While supplementation of rents in the private rental sector can play an important role in meeting social housing need in the short-term, the policy of increasingly relying on such supplementation to respond to long-term social housing need has proven to be an expensive failure, and is a key factor in the creation of the current homelessness crisis.



Legislate to end the long-term use of unsuitable emergency accommodation for children and families and implement Housing First commitments as a matter of urgency.

Prioritise families with children and move them from unsuitable emergency accommodation, including hotels, into long-term sustainable housing. Children should be able to access play and recreational facilities while in homeless accommodation. In order to avoid the risk of institutionalisation and the 'normalisation' of homelessness, families should not be left longer than six months in family hubs before being re-housed. In order to hold the Government accountable for delivering this aim, legislate to limit the use of emergency and temporary accommodation.



Fully implement the National Quality Standards Framework for homeless services and establish a robust compliance framework with an independent inspectorate.

Complete the review of the NQSF with a view to implementing them in all homeless services in 2019. In order to ensure that the standards are adhered to and applied consistently across all forms of homeless accommodation, including family hubs, publication and implementation of the Framework must be accompanied by the establishment of an independent inspectorate.



Complete the Rapid-Build Programme as a matter of urgency.

Complete the programme as a way to deliver more social housing units.

2.2 Parental Leave and Income supports

Section Grade:

B-

➔ Government Commitment

A Programme for a Partnership Government commits to:

Increase paid parental leave in the first year after birth and support stay-at-home parents through an increase in the Home Carer's Credit.

▶ **Progress: Good**

Introduce a new Working Family Payment to promote work over welfare and supplement the income of a household to ensure that every parent working at least 15 hours per week will have more take-home pay for each hour they work. Support middle-income lone parents in work by increasing income disregards through this scheme.

▶ **Progress: Steady**

'Parental Leave and Income Supports' receives a 'B-' grade in *Report Card 2019*, an improvement on last year's 'C' grade. This grade reflects the welcome commitment to introduce two weeks paid parental leave for each parent in the first year of their child's life by the end of 2019. It also reflects the increases in Budget 2019 for payments for over 12s and income disregards for lone parents.

Every child has the right to a standard of living that is adequate for their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.¹⁹¹ Parents and guardians have the primary responsibility to provide for the child's material needs but the State is also responsible for assisting parents and guardians to alleviate poverty where necessary.¹⁹² In 2016, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed its deep concern at the 'significant increase in the number of children living in consistent poverty' and in particular referred to single-parent households.¹⁹³ Article 18 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises that support for parents in the early years of a child's life is particularly important. In interpreting this provision, the UN Committee requires the State 'to take all appropriate measures to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from childcare services, maternity protection and facilities for which they are

191 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (20 November 1989) 1577 UNTS 3 (UNCRC) Art 27.

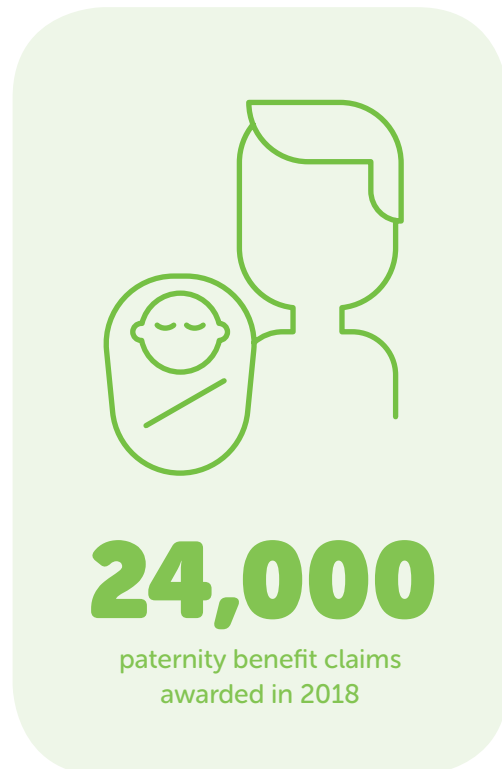
192 *ibid.*

193 UNCRC 'Concluding Observations: Ireland' (2016) UN Doc CRC/C/IRL/CO/3-4 para 59.

eligible'.¹⁹⁴ The UN Committee also promotes 'an integrated approach' which focuses on health and education supports for new parents and includes 'interventions that impact indirectly on parents' ability to promote the best interests of children (e.g. taxation and benefits, adequate housing, working hours)'.¹⁹⁵

► Paid Parental Leave:

The Budget 2019 announcement to introduce two weeks paid parental leave for each parent is an important milestone. The Parental Leave Scheme, due to commence in November 2019,¹⁹⁶ will enable both parents to access two weeks of parental leave paid at the same rate as maternity and paternity benefit during the first year of their child's life.¹⁹⁷ Leave under the scheme will be non-transferable between parents in recognition of the equal role a father has to play in their child's life¹⁹⁸ and to encourage both parents to take time off work to care for their children.¹⁹⁹ When combined with maternity and paternity benefit, parents will be supported to care for their children at home for the first 30 to 32 weeks of a child's life.²⁰⁰ The *First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028* committed to introduce an individual entitlement of seven weeks of paid parental leave per parent by 2021.²⁰¹ In 2019, an estimated 2,700 recipients are expected to avail of parental leave benefit at a cost of €1.5 million.²⁰² In a full year, 60,000 people are expected to receive the benefit at the cost of €32 million.²⁰³



Since the introduction of paid paternity leave in September 2016, more than 51,000 paternity benefit claims have been awarded²⁰⁴ including 24,000 in 2018.²⁰⁵ Paid paternity leave can be taken in the first six months after the birth of the baby (or adoption placement) by fathers or same-sex partners. In 2017, the first full year of the scheme, 26,139 applications for paternity benefit were made.²⁰⁶ The uptake of paternity benefit in 2018 equates to 60 per cent of maternity benefit applications in 2018.²⁰⁷ In 2019, €11.7 million was allocated for paternity benefit.²⁰⁸

Despite the proposal to introduce seven weeks paid parental leave per parent, when combined with maternity and paternity benefit, Ireland will still

194 UNCRRC 'General Comment No. 7 on Implementing Rights in Early Childhood' (2006) UN Doc CRC/C/GC/7/Rev.1 para 21.

195 *ibid* para 20(a).

196 Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Regina Doherty TD, Written Answers, Parental Leave, 6 November 2018 [45579/18].

197 Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP), 'Minister Doherty Announces Budget Package to Deliver Increases Across Core Welfare Payments and Specifically Impact on Children in Need' <<https://bit.ly/2DjH7mA>> accessed 8 November 2018.

198 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DEASP, 9 January 2019.

199 Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Regina Doherty TD, Written Answers, Parental Leave, 6 November 2018 [44849/18].

200 Maternity benefit runs for 26 weeks, alongside two weeks for paternity benefit and 2 weeks per parent of paid parental leave.

201 Government of Ireland, *First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019 – 2028*, (Stationary Office 2018) Strategic Action 1.1.

202 Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Regina Doherty TD, Written Answers, Parental Leave Expenditure, 13 November 2018 [46883/18].

203 *ibid*.

204 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DEASP through the Community and Voluntary Pillar of social partnership on 19 November 2018.

205 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DEASP, 9 January 2019.

206 Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Regina Doherty TD, Written Answers, Paternity Benefit, 23 October 2018 [43181/18].

207 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DEASP through the Community and Voluntary Pillar of social partnership on 19 November 2018.

208 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DEASP, 9 January 2019.

be at least 10 weeks short of providing paid family leave to cover the first year of a child's life. The cost to the State of providing additional Parental Benefit needs to be weighed against the benefit to children who do best when cared for at home during at least the first year of their lives.²⁰⁹ Furthermore, employee retention and productivity is higher when organisations have parental leave policies and provide flexible working arrangements.²¹⁰

The EU is currently negotiating a new work-life balance directive to address challenges for working parents and caregivers.²¹¹ In June 2018 the European Council agreed to introduce at least four months of paid parental leave for working parents including two non-transferable months.²¹² The original proposal set an age limit of 12 years but the updated position grants Member States discretion to set an age.²¹³ On return from parental leave, parents will be entitled to more flexible working arrangements.²¹⁴ Work is ongoing on a Family Leave Bill to consolidate existing leave entitlements including maternity, parental, carer's and adoptive leave²¹⁵ and the necessary legislation is due to be in place in late 2019.²¹⁶

The clear commitments to introduce paid parental leave are welcome but momentum needs to be maintained to meet the target of paid parental leave for the first year of a child's life in line with the strategic action outlined in *First 5*.

► Additional Support for Low-Income Families:

A Programme for a Partnership Government committed to introduce a Working Family Payment (WFP)²¹⁷ with the aim of reducing in-work poverty for families with children and to incentivise employment

by making work pay.²¹⁸ In 2017, the Family Income Supplement (FIS), a weekly tax-free payment for low-paid employees with children, was renamed the WFP.²¹⁹ To qualify for the payment, the applicant (and their partner) must work at least 38 hours every fortnight, have at least one qualified child and the weekly family income must be less than the set limit for their family size.²²⁰ Once the level of support for the applicant is determined, the family will receive a guaranteed level of income support a year if the applicant remains in full-time employment.²²¹ In November 2018, 54,000 families with almost 122,000 children were in receipt of WFP with approximately 24,000 of these families headed by lone parents.²²² On average, families receive a weekly payment of €135 a week.²²³

A review of the FIS found that 'existing in-work supports are effective, and work well in assisting individuals into employment'.²²⁴ However, the number of hours a family can work to qualify for the WFP places an additional burden on lone parent families. All applicants including lone parents must work 38 hours in a fortnight; two parent families can both work to make up the 38 hours. A maintenance disregard for recipients of WFP is due to take effect from March 2019²²⁵ and will help to ease the financial burden felt by lone parent families.

Budget 2019 introduced a number of important measures to help tackle child poverty and deprivation including the introduction of a higher rate of Qualified Child Increase (QCI) for children over the age of 12.²²⁶ This reflects the higher cost of living for adolescent

209 NICHD, 'Study of Early Childcare and Youth Development: Findings for children aged up to 4 ½ years' (2006) <<http://bit.ly/2AQTrED>> 1, accessed 31 January 2017.

210 Brigid Schulte et al, 'Paid Family Leave: How Much Time is Enough?' <<http://bit.ly/2roQ1Xz>> accessed 19 October 2017.

211 European Parliament, 'Briefing: EU Legislation in Progress: A New Directive on Work-Life Balance' <<https://bit.ly/2Gu8Xva>> accessed 9 November 2018.

212 *ibid.*

213 *ibid.*

214 *ibid.*

215 Minister of State for Integration, Immigration and Equality, David Stanton TD, Written Answers, Parental Leave 15 February 2018 [8044/18].

216 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DEASP, 9 January 2019.

217 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the Department of Social Protection (DSP), 23 January 2017.

218 Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Regina Doherty TD, Written Answers, Working Family Payment, 13 November 2018 [46862/18].

219 DSP, 'Ministerial Brief June 2017 – Part A' <<http://bit.ly/2AQRDXI>> accessed 20 September 2017.

220 DEASP, 'Working Family Payment (WFP), Formerly known as Family Income Supplement: Operational Guidelines' (*Welfare.ie*) <<https://bit.ly/2TXgVni>> accessed 9 November 2018.

221 *ibid.*

222 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DEASP, 9 January 2019.

223 Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Regina Doherty TD, Written Answers, Working Family Payment, 13 November 2018 [46862/18].

224 Department of Social Protection, 'Ministerial Brief June 2017 – Part A' <<http://bit.ly/2AQRDXI>> accessed 20 September 2017.

225 Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Regina Doherty TD, Written Answers, Working Family Payment Data, 23 October 2018 [43510/18]. The new weekly disregard will amount to €95 in respect of housing costs, with the remainder of the maintenance assessed at 50 per cent.

226 DEASP, 'Budget 2019: Main Social Welfare Changes and Rates of Payment' (*Welfare.ie* 2018) <<https://bit.ly/2ASHovc>> accessed 29 November 2018.

children.²²⁷ Targeted weekly increases of €5.20 will take effect from 2019 bringing the rate of QCI to €37 for over 12s and the rate for under 12s was also increased by €2.20.²²⁸ This welcome measure delivers an immediate action outlined in *Report Card 2018*. The increase of €25 on the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance, bringing the rates up to €150 for children under the age of 12 and €275 for children aged 12 and over,²²⁹ will also help to meet school costs although the rates still remain lower than 2011 levels. It is harder for lone parents, particularly those in work, to qualify for the payment as the amount of income they can earn and still qualify for the payment is lower than that for a two-parent household despite experiencing similar school costs.

A Programme for a Partnership Government committed to tackling low pay by increasing the minimum wage to '€10.50 per hour over the next five years'; strengthening the role of the Low Pay Commission to examine the gender pay gap and in-work poverty; and strengthening regulations on precarious work.²³⁰ Budget 2019 increased the hourly minimum wage by a further 25 cent to €9.80, the third increase in the term of the current Government. This represents only 82 per cent of the living wage which is necessary to maintain a minimum essential standard of living.²³¹ Families with children require larger incomes to meet the basics. Lone Parent families, the majority of which are headed by women, are particularly vulnerable to low-paid, precarious work and the gender pay-gap.²³² It is welcome that the Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2018 was enacted in December 2018 as it provides important rights for low-paid vulnerable workers.

The Home Carer's Tax Credit reduces the payable tax of married couples or civil partners where one partner works in the home caring for a child or other dependent person and they are jointly assessed



for tax purposes.²³³ In Budget 2019 the yearly Tax Credit was increased for the fourth time in four years from €1,200 to €1,500 where the home carer has an annual income of less than €7,200.²³⁴

► Income Disregards for Lone Parents:

In 2016, there were 218,817 one-parent families in Ireland of which almost 190,000 were headed by women.²³⁵ More than 350,000 children live in a household headed by a lone parent.²³⁶ In 2018, 63 per cent of lone parents were at work compared to 78.5 per cent of two-parent families.²³⁷ In 2017, one in five lone parent households lived in consistent poverty, 40 per cent were at risk of poverty and 45 per cent experienced enforced deprivation.²³⁸ Lone parents were five times as likely to live in consistent poverty, four times as likely to be at risk of poverty,

227 Dr Bernadette MacMahon DC, Roberty Thornton & Noreen Moloney 'Minimum Essential Standard of Living 2017' (Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice 2017) <<https://bit.ly/2T38XJ5>> accessed 29 November 2018, 14.

228 Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, *Part II - Expenditure Allocations 2019- 2021* (DPER 2018) 46.

229 Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, *Part II - Expenditure Allocations 2019 - 2021* (DPER 2018) 46.

230 Government of Ireland, *A Programme for a Partnership Government 2016* (Government Publications 2016) 40.

231 Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice, 'Budget 2019: MESL Impact Briefing' <<https://bit.ly/2FHgUzX>> accessed 9 November 2018.

232 Central Statistics Office, *Census of Population 2016: Profile 4 Households and Families* <<https://bit.ly/2IMcjfz>> accessed 7 February 2019.

233 Revenue, 'Home Carer Tax Credit' <<http://bit.ly/2nEtngq>> accessed 31 January 2017.

234 Citizens Information Board, 'Home Carer Tax Credit' <<https://bit.ly/2eFIVS2>> accessed 9 November 2018.

235 Central Statistics Office, *Census of Population 2016 - Profile 4 Households and Families* (Government Publications 2017).

236 *ibid.*

237 Central Statistics Office, 'Labour Force Survey Households and Family Units Quarter 2 2018' <<https://bit.ly/2sl1o4Y>> accessed 10 January 2019.

238 Central Statistics Office, 'Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2017 Results' (CSO 2018) <<https://bit.ly/2H32Q60>> accessed 10 January 2019. Calculated using Table 3.1.

and almost three times as likely to experience deprivation as two parent households.²³⁹ This compares to an overall consistent child poverty rate of 8.8 per cent²⁴⁰ meaning that children of lone parents are more than twice as likely to live in consistent poverty as the general child population.

One parent families are also at a much greater risk of in-work poverty; between 2015 and 2016 the rate of in-work poverty increased from 14 to 20.3 per cent.²⁴¹ In 2015 the comparable figure for a two parent household was 5.3 per cent and in 2016 this rate reduced to 4.3 per cent.²⁴² The comparable figure for a two parent family in 2015 was 5.3 per cent and in 2016 this rate reduced to 4.3 per cent.

Income disregards support lone parents in work as a certain portion of a person's earned income is not counted when a person is means-tested for a social welfare payment. Lone parents require additional supports to ensure that they can engage in paid work and there are concerns that with a focus on employment activation measures, transitioning to other payments such as Jobseekers Allowance (JA) or WFP acts as a disincentive to taking up part-time work due to the loss of income disregards.²⁴³

A 2018 ESRI report found that changes to the One Parent Family Payment (OPFP) eligibility criteria between 2011 and 2018 reduced the income of lone parents in employment.²⁴⁴ Sixteen per cent of lone parents were found to be financially better off not working due to the cost of childcare²⁴⁵ but is expected to fall to 13 per cent when the Affordable Childcare subsidies are in place.²⁴⁶

It is welcome that the *Whole of Government Approach to Tackling Child Poverty* recognises that lone parent families are 'significantly more at risk of poverty compared to the population as a whole'.²⁴⁷ In this context the Government has committed to reform the OPFP 'so that lone parents have access to a range of supports and services designed to provide them with pathways to work while acknowledging their caring responsibilities' and to reform 'initiatives to actively promote progression into the labour market'.²⁴⁸ The review of the payment is currently underway and is quantitative and qualitative in nature.²⁴⁹

Budget 2019 demonstrated a commitment by Government to put children and families first and lift children out of consistent poverty. All social welfare payments increased by €5 including the OPFP.²⁵⁰ The income disregard for OPFP or Jobseeker's Transition Payment (JST) was also increased by a further €20 per week meaning that from March 2019 lone parents can earn up to €150 weekly and still qualify for their full social welfare payment.²⁵¹ The income of non-earning lone parents increased by 2.5 per cent following Budget 2018 changes.²⁵² While the increase restores the disregard to pre- 2012 levels,²⁵³ it does not take account of the increased national minimum wage and inflation. In November 2018, 14,349 OPFP recipients (39 per cent of all recipients) are in employment, and of 14,418 JST recipients, 4,037 recipients work.²⁵⁴ The WFP is an important support for working parents; almost half of recipients are households headed by a lone parent.²⁵⁵

Income supports alone cannot alleviate or eradicate the high poverty rates being experienced by one parent families so it is important that the Government continues to invest in targeted supports and services for these families.

239 *ibid.*

240 *Ibid.*

241 Eurostat, 'At-risk-of-poverty rate by poverty threshold and work intensity of the household (population aged 0 to 59 years) - EU-SILC survey [ilc_li06] Last update: 14-12-2018' <<https://bit.ly/2RnZZtd>> accessed 10 January 2019.

242 *ibid.*

243 M. Millar and R. Crosse, *Lone Parents and Activation, What Works and Why: A Review of the International Evidence in the Irish Context* (The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, National University of Ireland, Galway 2016) 32.

244 Mark Regan, Claire Keane & John R. Walsh, *Lone-Parent Income and Work Incentives* (ESRI 2018) 12 – 13. When calculated against social welfare indexation, employed and unemployed lone parents lost 1.4 per cent of their income from 2011 – 2018. When calculated against wage indexation, employed and unemployed lone parents lost 3.4 and 4.8 per cent respectively.

245 Mark Regan, Claire Keane & John R. Walsh, *Lone-Parent Income and Work Incentives* (ESRI 2018) 18. ESRI, 'Changes to lone parent support made employment slightly less attractive' (*ESRI*, 5 July 2018) <<https://bit.ly/2ryQqIQ>> accessed 12 December 2018.

246 *ibid.*

247 DEASP, *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: Whole of Government Approach to Tackling Child Poverty* (DEASP 2017) 23.

248 *ibid.* 17.

249 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DEASP, 9 January 2019.

250 DEASP, 'Minister Doherty announces Budget Package to Deliver Increases across Core Welfare Payments' <<http://www.welfare.ie/en/pressoffice/Pages/pr091018.aspx>> accessed 9 November 2018.

251 *ibid.*

252 Department of Social Protection 'Social impact assessment of the welfare and income tax measures in Budget 2018' (November 2018) <<https://bit.ly/2RApxng>> accessed 9 November 2018.

253 One Family, 'One-Parent Family Payment & Income Disregards' (2014) <<http://bit.ly/1guvyYj>> accessed 31 January 2017.

254 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DEASP, 9 January 2019.

255 *ibid.*

Parental Leave and Income Supports

Immediate Actions for 2019



Enact the legislation to provide for paid leave for parents in the first year of a child's life.

Publish and enact the Family Leave Bill in 2019 to provide for paid parental leave to be taken after maternity leave by both parents. Monitor the uptake of paternity benefit to ensure that as many new parents as possible are availing of the entitlement.



Monitor the uptake of the Working Family Payment and consider ways in which it could be improved to support families in need.

Ensure the WFP is an effective targeted payment to alleviate child poverty.



Complete and publish the review of the One Parent Family Payment in 2019.

In line with the commitment in *The Whole of Government Approach to Tackling Child Poverty*, complete the review of the OPFP to ensure that lone parents can access a range of supports and services designed to provide them with pathways to work while acknowledging their caring responsibilities.

2.3 Prevention and Early Intervention

Section Grade:

C+

➔ Government Commitment

A Programme for a Partnership Government commits to:

Tackle child poverty by increasing community-based early intervention programmes, such as the ABC Programme

▶ **Progress: Steady**

Ensure the sharing and implementation of learning from such programmes.

▶ **Progress: Steady**

Establish a dedicated Prevention and Early Intervention Unit in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform/Finance in the first 100 days.

▶ **Progress: Steady**

'Prevention and Early Intervention' receives a 'C+' grade in *Report Card 2019*, a slight increase on last year's grade. This grade reflects the continued funding for the ABC Programme and its move into Tusla. The awarding of funding under the Quality and Capacity Building Initiative (QCBI) in 2018 was a welcome development. The Prevention and Early Intervention Unit held a series of stakeholder dialogues.

Every child has the right to survival and development.²⁵⁶ The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recognises that prevention and intervention strategies during early childhood have the potential to impact positively on young children's current well-being and future prospects.²⁵⁷ Prevention is defined as stopping a problem from happening in the first place; early intervention means acting at the first signs of trouble; while treatment means responding once what could go wrong, has gone wrong.²⁵⁸ Prevention and early intervention means intervening at a young age, early in the onset of difficulties, or at points of increased vulnerability such as school transitions, adolescence and parenthood.²⁵⁹ The Council of Europe's²⁶⁰ recommendation with regard

256 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (20 November 1989) 1577 UNTS 3 (UNCRC) Art. 6.

257 UNCRC 'General Comment No.7: Implementing child rights in early childhood' (2006) UN Doc CRC/C/G/GC/7/Rev.1 para 8.

258 Michael Little and Sonia Sodha, *Prevention and Early Intervention in Children's Services* (NESTA 2012) 3.

259 Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020* (DCYA 2014) 29.

260 The Council of Europe is a human rights institution. It includes

to fulfilling children's rights in social services planning, delivery and evaluation are based upon the principles of prevention and early intervention, child-focused partnership with parents, and assessment of the child's needs, to include and strengthen protective factors, as well as risk factors in the child's environment.²⁶¹

The UN Committee requires that States take all possible measures to improve perinatal care for mothers and babies, reduce infant and child mortality, and create conditions that promote the well-being of all young children.²⁶² Young children are especially vulnerable to the harm caused by unreliable, inconsistent relationships with parents and caregivers, growing up in extreme poverty and deprivation, or being surrounded by conflict and violence.²⁶³ States are required to render appropriate assistance to parents, guardians and extended families in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities.²⁶⁴ An integrated approach would include interventions that impact indirectly on parents' ability to promote the best interests of children (e.g. taxation and benefits, adequate housing, working hours) as well as those that have more immediate consequences (e.g. perinatal health services, parent education, home visitors).²⁶⁵ The UN Committee obliges States to create a safe and supportive environment for adolescents, including within their family, in schools, in all types of institutions in which they may live, within their workplace and/or in the society at large.²⁶⁶

International evidence suggests that prevention and early intervention approaches achieve much better results for children than later intervention, and can reduce the need for costly, less effective interventions later in life.²⁶⁷ However, Ireland's

balance of public spending is skewed towards crisis rather than preventative spending.²⁶⁸

Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014 – 2020 identifies prevention and early intervention as one of six 'transformational goals'.²⁶⁹ These goals aim to strengthen the system of supports around children and young people by improving timeliness, effectiveness and responsiveness of policy and services that will lead to better outcomes for children and young people in the future.²⁷⁰ Strategically *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures* considers universal services as the main providers of prevention and early intervention, naming early childhood education and care services, schools, youth, community and health services.²⁷¹ Prevention and early intervention is also central to *First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028* published in November 2018.²⁷² The Strategy adopts a progressive universalist approach, by providing universal services and programmes in child health, parenting and family supports, early learning and care with targeted services for families who need additional support.²⁷³ *First 5* also commits to measures that are key to prevention and early intervention, including a new model of parenting support, a dedicated child health workforce and a package of measures to tackle early childhood poverty.

► Community-based Early Intervention Programmes:

From 2004, the Government and the Atlantic Philanthropies co-funded evidence-informed programmes aiming to improve outcomes for children in urban areas of disadvantage, by intervening in their lives from the pre-natal stage to 18 years.²⁷⁴ The Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme, operating since 2013, offers interventions in 13 urban sites around the country addressing child health and development, children's learning, parenting, and

47 member States, 28 of which are in the EU. It promotes human rights through international conventions, monitoring member states' implementation progress and making recommendations through independent expert monitoring bodies. It oversees the implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights. The European Court of Human Rights is a key institution.

261 Council of Europe, *Council of Europe Recommendation on children's rights and social services friendly to children and families* (Council of Europe 2011) 9.

262 UNCRRC 'General Comment No.7: Implementing child rights in early childhood' (2006) UN Doc CRC/C/GC/7/Rev.1 para 10.

263 UNCRRC 'General Comment No.7: Implementing child rights in early childhood' (2006) UN Doc CRC/C/GC/7/Rev.1, para 36.

264 *ibid* para 20.

265 *ibid*, para 20a.

266 UNCRRC 'General Comment No.4: Adolescent health and development in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child' (2003) UN Doc CRC/GC/2003/4 para 39a.

267 Early Intervention Foundation, *Realising the Potential of Early Intervention* (Early Intervention Foundation 2018) 18, Prevention and Early Intervention Network, 'The Case

for Prevention and Early Intervention' (PEIN 2014) 3.

268 Eilis Lawlor & Sinéad McGilloway, *An Economic Appraisal of the Young Ballymun Initiative* (Just Economics 2012) 36.

269 DCYA, *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020* (DCYA 2014) 23.

270 *ibid*.

271 *ibid*.

272 Government of Ireland, *First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028* (Stationary Office 2018).

273 *ibid* 26 and 102.

274 The Atlantic Philanthropies, *Investing in a Better Future for All* (The Atlantic Philanthropies) <<https://bit.ly/29GrZOI>> accessed 19 October 2017.

integrated service delivery.²⁷⁵ The ABC Programme aimed to test and evaluate innovative prevention and early intervention approaches to improve outcomes for children and families at risk of poverty.²⁷⁶ The Programme was due to end in 2016, but funding was extended and renewed until December 2018.²⁷⁷

As the main purpose of the ABC Programme was to identify key learnings and transfer this knowledge to established services, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) decided, in consultation with key stakeholders, to transfer the current ABC Programme to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency from September 2018.²⁷⁸ The transition requires the alignment of the ABC Programme with Tusla's Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) Programme to help embed and enhance the Agency's prevention and early intervention work.²⁷⁹ The transfer will enable 'the ongoing delivery of innovative measures, and mainstream evidence-based practice to improve outcomes for children and families'²⁸⁰ and build on the Tusla PPFS programme.²⁸¹ The national evaluation of the ABC Programme was completed in 2018 to guide future development.²⁸² It highlighted improvements in children's socio-emotional well-being, positive parent-child relationships and improved school-readiness as well as professional ways of working and increased capacity to capture and use data and evidence.²⁸³ A budget of €9.5 million has been allocated to Tusla's PPFS programme in 2019, including the next phase of the ABC Programme.²⁸⁴ It is welcome that work is ongoing to develop an action plan for the next phase of the ABC Programme as part of the PPFS from 2019 onwards.²⁸⁵ This complex work requires investment in services and the relevant workforces in Tusla, early care and education services, and the

HSE's public health nursing service. Consideration should also be given as to how to ensure the learning and mainstreaming is expanded to rural locations.

► Sharing and Implementing Learning:

The DCYA launched the Quality and Capacity Building Initiative (QCBI) to 'take a co-ordinated approach to enhance capacity, knowledge and quality in prevention and early intervention for children, young people and their families.'²⁸⁶ The aim of the QCBI is to improve the outcomes for children and young people experiencing disadvantage through supporting organisations working with children and young people to take an evidence informed approach to their work.²⁸⁷ QCBI involves four components aiming to: align data; harness evidence; enhance implementation through coaching and development; and embed prevention and early intervention approaches through the development of a shared quality framework.²⁸⁸

In 2018, DCYA and Tusla finalised the development of the first phase of the Outcomes for Children National Data and Information Hub.²⁸⁹ The data hub is an online interactive area based geo-mapping system based on the five *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* national indicators using readily available administrative data and is expected to be launched in early 2019.²⁹⁰ In addition, DCYA made progress on securing the development of an online evidence matrix to collate information on the impact that has been achieved by evidence based programmes across the globe and in Ireland, and provide guidance on what to consider when implementing these in a local context.²⁹¹ These developments as part of the QCBI aim to ensure that the best and most suitable approach or programme can be chosen by commissioners, and service providers for the local context.²⁹² The Evidence Matrix will highlight factors such as impact and resource effectiveness and will signpost people in the direction of organisations and practitioners who use these approaches to good effect, thereby strengthening the community practice connections.²⁹³

275 DCYA, 'ABC Overview' <http://bit.ly/2BczHT>> accessed 13 October 2017.

276 *ibid.*

277 Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Katherine Zappone TD, Written Answers, Area Based Childhood Programme, 6 November 2018 [45860/18].

278 Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Katherine Zappone TD, Written Answers, Area Based Childhood Programme, 18 October 2018 [43139/18].

279 *Ibid.*

280 Government of Ireland, *First 5- A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028* (Stationary Office 2018) 48.

281 *ibid.* 127.

282 *ibid.* 45.

283 Centre for Effective Services, National Evaluation of the Area Based Childhood Programme: Main Report, (DCYA 2018) x.

284 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DCYA, 20 December 2018.

285 *ibid.*

286 Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Quality and Capacity Building Initiative Innovation Fund, Dáil Debates, 13 June 2018.

287 *ibid.*

288 DCYA, Quality and Capacity Building Initiatives (QCBI) (DCYA) <<https://bit.ly/2RWDSWz>> 9 November 2018.

289 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DCYA, 20 December 2018.

290 *ibid.*

291 *ibid.*

292 *ibid.*

293 *ibid.*

Some €2.2 million in funding for 2018 was allocated to the QCBI Innovation Fund under the Dormant Accounts Fund to test prevention and early intervention innovations that build on existing data and evidence to improve outcomes for children and young people (0-24 years) who experience disadvantage in Ireland.²⁹⁴ A spectrum of projects were funded including English language supports to programme refugees, efforts to scale-up parenting supports, pedagogical leadership in early childhood education and care centres, and supports for youth services for young people up to 24 years of age experiencing education and social disadvantage.²⁹⁵ Under the QCBI Innovation Fund, two types of funding were made available: SCALE funding supports organisations to build on existing programmes or models with demonstrated positive outcomes for children and young people while SEED funding was used to support new and creative approaches to problems faced by children and young people experiencing disadvantage.²⁹⁶ In total, 239 applications were made²⁹⁷ and 29 organisations were awarded SEED funding²⁹⁸ and 22 awarded SCALE funding.²⁹⁹ In November 2018 the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Dr Katherine Zappone TD, announced the launch of a new Network Support Fund under the professional development and capacity building QCBI strand.³⁰⁰ The aim of the scheme is to improve the capacity of providers and practitioners in the 'appraisal and application' of evidence based prevention and early intervention methods through 'collaborative programmes of developing including coaching, mentoring and networking'.³⁰¹

Work is ongoing to identify and support professional learning approaches that the QCBI can engage to ensure everyone working with children, young people and their families understands what works in prevention and early intervention and can use data, evidence and practice approaches to plan, deliver and evaluate their services.³⁰² In 2018, the

DCYA and University of Limerick developed a pilot Executive Leadership Programme for service providers and practitioners in the Dublin North East inner city under the QCBI.³⁰³ The Department also brought all grantees from the Innovation Fund together to consider and plan for the development of action learning sets across grantees in 2019.³⁰⁴

► Prevention and Early Intervention Unit:

The Prevention and Early Intervention Unit (PEIU) was established in the Department of Expenditure and Public Reform (DPER) in May 2017³⁰⁵ and forms part of DPER's Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) - an integrated cross-Government service to enhance the role of economics and value-for-money analysis in public policy making.³⁰⁶ It aims to support the development of a sustainable and cross-sectoral approach to prevention and early intervention in public policy in the context of the management and evaluation of public expenditure.³⁰⁷ The Unit focuses on prevention and early interventions that can improve the life outcomes of children as well as the quality of life of older people dealing with long-term conditions such as chronic illness, which the PEIU locates within the context of population health.³⁰⁸

The PEIU aims to leverage recent budgetary reforms³⁰⁹ to ensure that the IGEES considers prevention and early intervention as a policy option in its management and evaluation of public spending, in the implementation of Ireland's Public Spending Code³¹⁰

294 Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Quality and Capacity Building initiative, Dáil Debates, 20 September 2018.

295 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 5 February 2019.

296 *ibid.*

297 *ibid.*

298 DCYA, *List of Successful Projects: SEED Strand* (DCYA 2018).

299 DCYA, *List of Successful Projects: SCALE Strand* (DCYA 2018).

300 DCYA, Quality and Capacity Building Initiatives Network Support Fund (*Department of Children and Youth Affairs*) <<https://bit.ly/2Rh3JbN>> 9 November 2018.

301 *ibid.*

302 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DCYA, 20 December 2018.

303 Dublin North East Inner City, 'Executive Leadership Course' (NEIC, 20 November 2018) <<https://bit.ly/2RBKNSH>> accessed 10 January 2019.

304 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DCYA, 20 December 2018.

305 Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, *Topical Issues 14: Prevention and early Intervention*, <<https://bit.ly/2CXrhMQ>> accessed 7 October 2017.

306 Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service, 'About Us', (IGEES 2019) <<https://igees.gov.ie/about-us/>> accessed 8 February 2019.

307 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DPER, 8 February 2019.

308 Prevention and Early Intervention Unit Prevention & Early Intervention Series, Focussed Policy Assessment No.1, October 2018 <<https://igees.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/PEIU-FPA-Series-Immunisation.pdf>> (accessed 22 November 2018).

309 John McCarthy, 'The budgetary process: recent changes and further evolution', (Department of Finance 19 May 2016) <https://www.finance.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/160519-the-budgetary-process-in-Ireland_PAII.pdf> accessed 8 February 2019.

310 Irish public bodies are obliged to ensure that the best possible value for money is obtained whenever public money is being spent or invested. The Public Spending Code is the set of

and in performance budgeting.³¹¹ This work is intended to help support the further development of existing prevention and early interventions, and act as a future resource for those who are charged with designing, implementing and evaluating such interventions.³¹²

The PEIU hosted dialogue events in March and May 2018 with a broad range of stakeholders from the children and youth sector and the health sector.³¹³ The dialogues were structured around three core questions: what is meant by prevention and early intervention; how do we know if prevention and early intervention works and how this information can be used to inform decision-makers.³¹⁴ The purpose of the dialogue sessions was to establish an opportunity for cross-sectoral sharing of the deep and broad experience and expertise of prevention and early interventions in Ireland.³¹⁵ In July 2018, the Unit published a report providing a summary overview of the points raised at the dialogue sessions.³¹⁶

In working towards drafting a thematic consideration of prevention and early intervention in Ireland, the PEIU is publishing a series of Focused Policy Assessments on key prevention and early interventions.³¹⁷ These assessments examine key publically funded interventions by focusing on their rationale, allocated resources, services provided and achievements relative to their stated goals.³¹⁸ In 2018, the Unit published five reports, four of which related to interventions that have a direct benefit for

children and young people: immunisation, aftercare, educational welfare and early learning and childcare.³¹⁹

The Unit's objective has been to add value to the development of prevention and early intervention in the public policy space and avoid duplication with related initiatives, such as the DCYA's lead role on prevention and early intervention for children and families, the work of the Department of Health, and IGEES' economic evaluations.³²⁰ The Unit's role is limited in scope in terms of the influence it exerts in designing or developing public policy as it has no decision-making powers and is advisory in nature.

However, it does have an important function in embedding prevention and early intervention in terms of managing and evaluating public spending. Irish policy is often skewed towards crisis-intervention or entrenched societal problems resulting in more costly services. Determining the impact of different levels and types of public expenditure on childhood and life outcomes is complex. In this regard the Eurochild Childonomics³²¹ project may be helpful as it combines economic discipline with children's rights and has developed a methodology to assess how different inputs – policies, services, and investments – produce better outcomes for children, families, communities and society as a whole. Childonomics is directly relevant and could be used to inform the work of the PEIU in its economic evaluations and the implementation of the Public Spending Code, particularly in how to research, identify and present inputs and child outcomes that meet the goals of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* as well as ensuring transparent and accountable public spending.

rules and procedures to ensure that standards are upheld, bringing together all of the elements of the value-for-money framework. Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 'The Public Spending Code' (DPER 2019) <<https://publicspendingcode.per.gov.ie/>> accessed 8 February 2019.

311 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DPER, 8 February 2019.

312 *ibid.*

313 Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, *Dialogue on Effective Prevention and Early Intervention Approaches in Human Services: Working Towards a Shared Understanding* (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform 2018) 2.

314 *ibid* 2 - 3.

315 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DPER, 21 December 2018.

316 Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, *Dialogue on Effective Prevention and Early Intervention Approaches in Human Services: Working Towards a Shared Understanding* (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform 2018) 2.

Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service, 'PEIU Focussed Policy Assessments', (IGEES 2018) <<https://bit.ly/2QXnCDZ>> accessed 26 November 2018.

317 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DPER, 21 December 2018.

318 Prevention and Early Intervention Unit Prevention & Early Intervention Series, Focussed Policy Assessment No.1, October 2018, 1 <<https://bit.ly/2RgD3aF>> accessed 22 November 2018.

319 Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service, 'PEIU Focussed Policy Assessments', (IGEES 2018) <<https://igees.gov.ie/peiu-focussed-policy-assessments/>> accessed 26 November 2018.

320 Communication received by the Children's Rights Alliance from the DPER, 8 February 2019.

321 Eurochild, 'Next Steps for Childonomics' (Eurochild 9 November 2018) <<https://bit.ly/2SBpiaX>> (accessed 8 February 2019).

Prevention and Early Intervention **Immediate Actions for 2019**



Complete the development of the action plan for the next phase of the ABC Programme as part of the PPFS from 2019 onwards.

The action plan will be important to provide clarity and direction for the continuing ABC programmes under the aegis of Tusla.



The PEIU could consider publishing a plan for 2019 to communicate its role and its planned activities for 2019 to the sector.

The Unit could apply the Childonomics methodology to its work in embedding prevention and early intervention into the public policy process.