

Budget 2022

What does it mean for Children and Young People?

The Children's Rights Alliance has summarised Budget 2022 from a children and young person's perspective.

There are welcome measures in Budget 2022 that will help families to keep their heads above water. These include increases to core social welfare rates, the Fuel Allowance, the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance (BSCFA) and the National Minimum Wage. The changes to the income thresholds to qualify for the BSCFA and changes to the National Childcare Scheme will benefit one parent families in particular, and further funding for hot school meals will help to address food poverty.

However, while there were increases to the Qualified Child Increase (QCI) for children whose parents are in receipt of a social welfare payment, the €3 increase for children over 12 falls far short of the €10 increase that was needed to ensure that their parents have an adequate income to meet their higher living costs. Overall, these measures are piecemeal, and Budget 2022 missed the opportunity to have a sustained and meaningful impact on child poverty. In the Children's Rights Alliance pre-budget submission, we called for the establishment of a child poverty office to co-ordinate a whole of government approach to tackling this issue. At a cost of just €3.5m this modest investment could have made real progress towards the elimination of child poverty by leveraging the commitments in the EU Child Guarantee and developing a broader national child poverty action plan to drive forward a coordinated and whole of government approach.

Additional resources for Garda operations and in particular the Garda National Protective Services Bureau are welcome given the significant increase in child sexual abuse material. An initial allocation of €5.5m for the establishment of the new Media Commission, which will include the hiring of an Online Safety Commissioner is positive but further resourcing will be required if the Government is serious about protecting children online.

Increased budget allocations for school staff, the expansion of the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme, the resourcing of the GP visit card for children under the age of eight and increased resources for mental health and disability services are welcome. Additional funding for Tusla, the Child and Family Agency as well as

resources for the implementation of the White Paper to End Direct Provision will target some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable families.

While Budget 2022 does not go far enough in addressing child poverty it is a good start. Further ambition is needed to ensure that all children can have a decent childhood.

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

Children, Equality, Disability, Inclusion and Youth

The total budget allocated to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Inclusion and Youth in 2022 is €2.1bn. This includes €33m for capital funding and €67m of current expenditure related to Covid-19 measures. Increases to the Department's budget were focused on three key areas – early childhood education and care, extra funding for Tusla and support for the ending of Direct Provision.

An increased allocation of €78m for early childhood education and care will support core funding of services and the expansion of the National Childcare Scheme (NCS). This brings the total allocation under this budget line to a record €716m investment. The vast majority of the increased resources, €69m, will go towards a new funding stream for early learning and childcare providers. This funding, which will benefit 4,700 providers from September 2022, will be linked to quality improvement and will require a freeze in parents' fees. An extension to the NCS to children under 15 years of age will benefit 40,000 children. A further 5,000 disadvantaged children will benefit from increased support under the NCS subsidised hours when the practice of deducting hours spent in education (including pre-school) is removed.

An additional allocation to Tusla of €41m is particularly positive given the impact of the pandemic on a wide range of child welfare and protection issues. This additional funding will allow the agency to develop further, as well as resourcing the development of statutory residential care.

The publication of the White Paper to End Direct Provision and establish a new International Protection Support Service was a welcome development in 2021 and the additional allocation of €28m in 2022 to support its implementation indicates a real commitment to change in this area. This funding will help people to move out of Direct Provision to community-based accommodation.

The vast majority of the disability budget remains in the Department of Health. However, an allocation of €1.8m under this Department's budget will help to support the participation of people with disabilities in the policy-making process (€0.5m) and €0.1m for the design and implementation of the Autism Innovation Strategy.

The announcement of a Youth Travel Card, giving young people aged 19 to 23 years discounted fares on public transport, announced by Minister for Transport, Eamon Ryan TD, was based on a direct initiative from the Comhairle na nOg Executive and is a great example of young people's participation in decision-making.

Expenditure measures announced include:

- An additional allocation of €78m for childcare, to support the quality of ELC and SAC (€69m); reform to the NCS to broaden eligibility (€9m).
 - An increase in funding to Tusla of €41m, this funding will:
 - Address increased demand for services and case complexity.
 - Increase statutory residential care provision
 - Improve ICT, data management and allow the agency to grow in line with its corporate plan
 - Fund posts to meet the demand arising from the Birth Information and Tracing legislation
 - Maintain supports for DSGBV services
 - Support community and voluntary sector
 - Continue to support capital programmes
 - €28m to implement the reform set out in the White Paper to End Direct Provision.
 - An additional €5m for Youth Services.
 - Increased funding to over €1m for LGBTI+ organisations.
 - Total funding of €5.6m for Traveller and Roma organisations in 2022.
 - €0.5m to support people with a disability in the policy making process.
 - €0.1m to support the design and implementation of the Autism Innovation Strategy.
 - €4.5m for the Action Plan in response to the Final Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation (this includes resourcing the adoption information and tracing legislation and an additional allocation to the Adoption Authority of Ireland to support this).
 - €3m for the setting up of the Guardian ad Litem Office.
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Education

The total budget allocated to the Department of Education is €9.23bn. This includes an allocation of €792m in capital funding.

Our response:

Given the impact of the pandemic on children with special educational needs it is welcome that 980 special education posts will be created in 2022. The allocation of a further 1,165 Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) is also welcome.

An allocation of 350 additional teachers will reduce the teacher to pupil ratio by one to 24:1 in line with a commitment in the Programme for Government to reduce class sizes.

The provision of €20m for resources for school libraries will help to promote and foster literacy amongst children, this is particularly important given the disruption in learning over the last 18 months. The pandemic also shone a light on the digital divide and the allocation of €50m in 2021 for ICT grants in primary and post-primary schools will hopefully help to bridge this gap.

The expansion of the DEIS scheme through an investment of €18m will mean that more children in disadvantaged areas will benefit from the increased supports and programmes provided by these schools. However, it is important to note that half of children experiencing poverty are in non-DEIS schools.

With increased financial pressures on families as a result of the pandemic, back to school costs remain a serious concern for the Alliance. A third of parents report going into debt just to try get their child ready for the return to school. It is disappointing to see that no further progress will be made to rollout the Free School Books pilot for a second year in a row despite the Programme for Government commitment.

The funding secured under the Covid-19 Learning and Support Scheme (CLASS) in September 2021 was a welcome first step in tackling the impact of the pandemic on children and young people's learning. However, further resources were not allocated in Budget 2022 to support children's wellbeing. There was no further funding for the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) or the School Completion Programme.

Expenditure measures announced include:

- €16m for 980 special education teachers
 - 620 posts for children in mainstream classes
 - 360 posts will allow for 287 new special classes to be open
- €12m for 1,165 additional special needs assistants bringing the total number of SNAs to 19,200:
 - 574 in new special classes;
 - 46 in new special school places; and
 - 545 to support students in mainstream classes.
- €6m to provide an extra 350 teachers to reduce staffing schedules by one in primary schools.
- An additional €50m for ICT grants for primary and post-primary schools.
- €20m for books, audio books and other reading materials for school libraries.
- €18m to increase the number of schools in the DEIS programme.
- An extra 40 administrative principals to be assigned to special schools and schools with two or more special classes.
- Increased funding for voluntary schools (reflecting inconsistencies in historic capitation funding in post-primary school €2m).
- A €30m increase in funding for School Transport.
- Additional funding of €30m for the Summer Works Scheme in 2022.

Health

The total Budget allocated to the Department of Health for 2022 is €22.2bn. This includes €1.06bn in capital voted expenditure.

Our response:

We are acutely aware of the importance of making healthcare as accessible as possible for families. Positive interventions such as the expansion of free GP care for children under the age of eight as well as tackling hospital charges for children under the age of 18 will help to ease the financial burden of health for many vulnerable families. However, the expansion of the GP visit card to under eights has been a commitment for a number of years. Now we need to see this implemented through negotiating an agreement with GPs in 2022.

Targeted resources for waiting lists are vital and an allocation of €250m will hopefully go some way to helping address the impact of the pandemic on health services. Additional mental health

resources are much needed given the impact of the pandemic on this aspect of children and young people's lives. We await further detail on this in the Health Service Executive (HSE) Service Plan for 2022.

While a €10m funding allocation for a healthy weight campaign is welcome, further work is needed on public health issues such as smoking, e-cigarette use and obesity which are increasingly impacting children and young people.

Expenditure measures announced include:

- Expansion of free GP care for children under the age of eight.
- Reduction of €14 in the Drug Payment Scheme threshold to €100 per month.
- The financial burden of hospital charges for children under 18 will be addressed on a phased basis.
- An additional allocation of €250m to tackle waiting lists (€200m for the HSE and €50m for the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) bringing total allocation to €350m).
- Increase in the number of Whole Time Equivalents (WTE) health workers by 8,000 (6 per cent) in 2022.
- Funding to address the needs of the 1,700 young people with disabilities who will leave school and training programmes in 2022.
- An additional €24m in mental health including the recruitment of over 260 additional posts.
- Funding for two Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) hubs and out-of-hours services such as crisis cafes and crisis resolution services.
- An additional €10m to Healthy Ireland which will include funding to implement a healthy weight campaign.
- €6m for the National Drug Strategy which includes funding to enhance services for vulnerable children and young people.
- €9m to fund Accessible Contraception for Women aged 17-25.

Social Protection

The total Budget allocated to the Department of Social Protection for 2022 is €2.343bn. This includes €16m in capital expenditure.

Our response:

Increases to both core social welfare payments and the Qualified Child Increase (QCI) for children under 12 are welcome steps in terms of moving towards a Minimum Essential Standard of Living. However, the €3 increase in the rate of the QCI for children over 12 fell far below what the Children's Rights Alliance and others called for in the run up to Budget 2022. An increase of €10 would have been more realistic in meeting the costs of older children. Given the additional costs that families incur at Christmas an additional week's social welfare payment or Christmas bonus is positive.

A €5 increase in the Fuel Allowance will help to cover the increased costs of fuel this winter however, it is unlikely to be sufficient to meet escalating prices. The changes to the Back to

School Clothing and Footwear Allowance income thresholds to ensure that lone parents have the same access to the payment as two-parent households and an increase of €10 in this payment will assist with back to school costs next year but more action across government is needed to address school costs.

Continued expansion of the hot school meals programme to include those schools who previously expressed an interest in delivering this scheme is welcome. However, it is unclear if additional funding for new schools, particularly those who will now come into the DEIS programme, will be provided.

The expansion of Parent's Benefit by two weeks is welcome but one parent families will only be entitled to half the leave of two parent families. The equalisation of the BSCFA income thresholds was a positive equality measure and it is disappointing the same logic was not applied in relation to Parent's Benefit as people parenting alone cannot avail of the same amount of leave as a two-parent household.

For parents with children in hospital, the decision to extend the Domiciliary Care Allowance for six months is positive and combined with the commitment by the Department of Health to look at hospital charges for children under 18, this is a clear acknowledgement that these families need additional supports.

Expenditure measures announced include:

- An increase of €5 in the rate of all core weekly payments (including One Parent Family, job seeker payments etc).
- The qualified child increase will rise by €3 for children aged 12 and over and by €2 child dependants up to age 12.
- All social welfare recipients will receive an additional week's payment in December
- The Fuel Allowance will increase by €5 per week from 12 October; the threshold also increases by €20 to €120 and those in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance and Supplementary Welfare Allowance recipients may qualify for Fuel Allowance after 12 months (previously 15 months).
- The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance increased by €10 and more Lone Parents can now qualify as the income thresholds have been harmonised to that of two parent families.
- An additional €3m in funding for the Hot School Meals Programme means a further 16,000 students, from schools that previously expressed an interest in the scheme, will benefit from January 2022.
- The number of weeks Parent's Benefit is available increases by two weeks to seven weeks in respect of children born or adopted from July 2022.
- €5 increase in Maternity/Paternity/Adoptive/Parents Benefit from January 2022.
- Domiciliary Care Allowance will be paid for up to six months for children who go into hospital (currently three months).
- €10 increase in the weekly income threshold for Working Family Payment regardless of family size.

Housing, Local Government and Heritage

The total Budget allocated for the Department in 2022 is almost €6bn. This includes over €3.4bn in capital expenditure. Additional capital funding from the Land Development Agency and Housing Finance Agency of €1.5bn.

Our response:

Until we see the results of newly built and acquired social housing, many children and families experiencing homelessness will remain in emergency accommodation, in family hubs and without the homes that children need to grow and thrive. The Budget 2022 commitment to build 9,200 new social homes is a positive step towards helping families out of emergency accommodation.

While the expansion of programmes such as the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) and the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) are welcome, the reliance on the private rental sector continues to put many families at risk of homelessness. The insecurity of housing tenure means many families have to find accommodation on a near yearly basis.

We welcome the €18m increase allocated for the delivery of Traveller accommodation but after successive years of little to no follow through from local authorities on spending these resources to improve the lives of Traveller children and families, Government will need to prioritise action in this area under their programme for government.

Expenditure measures announced include:

- Total capital funding for building homes is €2.58bn with 9,200 new social homes delivered.
- The housing needs of 31,000 additional households will be supported through €4bn in funding. This includes:
 - 11,820 new social homes provided through build, acquisition and leasing programmes. 9,200 will be newly built homes.
- An additional €44m will be allocated to the First Home scheme which will help purchase 1,750 homes.
- €18m increase in capital funding for Traveller accommodation.
- Current funding of €1.37bn will support a range of programmes including the delivery of 2,620 new social homes through leasing programmes.
 - An additional 14,800 households will be brought in under HAP (€27m).
 - €133m for RAS to support an additional 800 households and the ongoing cost of supporting 17,000 existing tenancies.
- €194m in funding for the delivery of homeless services. €40m of this funding will be for health supports.

Justice

The total Budget allocated for 2022 is €3.15bn, this includes a capital allocation of €270m.

Our response:

The Department of Justice received an increase of five per cent in its budget allocation for 2022.

An additional allocation of funding for Garda operational expenditure including for Garda National Protective Services Bureau is welcome. Hotline.ie reported a 142 per cent increase in 2020 in child sexual abuse material which appeared to be self-generated images or videos. Just one public report can lead to hundreds, if not thousands, of online child sexual abuse material. Additional investment will not only address the crimes occurring now, but it will also serve as an important preventive measure to intervene as accessing this type of content at a very young age can lead to people committing offences later on.

We particularly welcome the investment in funding to combat domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. This is a critical intervention given the increased incidence of domestic violence during the pandemic. Additional funding for the Youth Justice Strategy is also a positive development.

Expenditure measures announced include:

- An additional €10.5m for Garda operational expenditure including increased resources for the Garda National Protective Services Bureau including €5.2 million in increased funding for victims including vulnerable witnesses and to combat domestic, sexual and gender-based violence – including improvements to Garda Divisional Protective Services Units (DPSUs).
- An additional €3.3m to support the work of the Legal Aid Board, including the provision of legal advice and legal aid service to victims of sexual offences
- €1m to implement the Courts Service Modernisation Programme.
- €6.7m for interventions and implementation of the Youth Justice Strategy.
- €1.2m for the International Protection Services to implement Government Advisory Group recommendations on processing times and further funding for International Protection Appeals Tribunal.
- Additional staffing resources for the Data Protection Commission (€3.9m).
- An allocation of €1.2m is provided to reflect the Programme for Government commitment to introducing a regularisation scheme for undocumented migrants and their dependents.

Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media

The total Budget allocated for 2022 is €1.197bn with the capital budget accounting for €202m.

Our response:

We welcome the announcement of an initial allocation of €5.5 million to formally establish the new Media Commission and hire an Online Safety Commissioner. It is critical that this office is adequately resourced from the outset if the Government is serious about protecting children online as well supporting the other functions of the Commission.

Expenditure measures announced includes

- An allocation of €5.5m for the establishment of a Media Commission in 2022, including the hiring of an Online Safety Commissioner who will begin work following the enactment of the Online Safety and Media Regulation Bill.