

Pre-Budget Submission 2022

October 2021



Founded in 1995, the Children's Rights Alliance unites over 135 members working together to make Ireland one of the best places in the world to be a child. We change the lives of all children in Ireland by making sure that their rights are respected and protected in our laws, policies and services.

Accompaniment Support Service for Children (A.S.S.C.)
Ag Eisteacht
Alcohol Action Ireland
Amnesty International Ireland
An Cosán
Aoibhneas
AsIAm
Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI)
ATD Fourth World – Ireland Ltd
Atheist Ireland
Barnardos
Barretstown Camp
Bedford Row Family Project
BeLonG To Youth Services
Blossom Ireland
Catholic Guides of Ireland
Childrens Books Ireland
Children's Grief Centre
Child Care Law Reporting Project
Childhood Development Initiative
Childminding Ireland
Children in Hospital Ireland
Clarecare
COPE Galway
Cork Life Centre
Crann Centre
Crosscare
CyberSafeKids
Cycle Against Suicide
Dalkey School Project National School
Daughters of Charity Child and Family Service
Dental Health Foundation of Ireland
Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, UCC
Disability Federation of Ireland
Doras
Down Syndrome Ireland
Dublin Rape Crisis Centre
Dyslexia Association of Ireland
Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland
Early Childhood Ireland
Educate Together
EPIC
Equality for Children
Extern Ireland
Féach
Focus Ireland
Foróige
Gaelscoileanna Teo
Galway Traveller Movement
Good Shepherd Cork
Immigrant Council of Ireland
Inclusion Ireland
Institute of Guidance Counsellors
Irish Aftercare Network
Irish Association for Infant Mental Health
Irish Association of Social Workers
Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)
Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL)
Irish Foster Care Association
Irish Girl Guides
Irish Heart Foundation
Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO)
Irish Penal Reform Trust
Irish Primary Principals Network
Irish Refugee Council
Irish Second Level Students' Union (ISSU)
Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
Irish Traveller Movement
Irish Youth Foundation (IVF)
Jack & Jill Children's Foundation
Jigsaw
Katharine Howard Foundation
Kids' Own Publishing Partnership
Kinship Care
Leap Ireland
Let's Grow Together! Infant and Childhood Partnerships CLG.
LGBT Ireland
Mecpaths
Mental Health Reform
Mercy Law Resource Centre
Migrant Rights Centre Ireland
Mothers' Union
My Mind
My Project Minding You
Museum of Childhood Project
Music Generation
New Directions
National Childhood Network
National Council for the Blind
National Forum of Family Resource Centres
National Parents Council Post Primary
National Parents Council Primary
National Youth Council of Ireland
Novas
One Family
One in Four
Parents Plus
Pavee Point
Peter McVerry Trust
Prevention and Early Intervention Network
Private Hospitals Association
Psychological Society Ireland
Rainbow Club Cork
Rainbows Ireland
Rape Crisis Network Ireland (RCNI)
Realt Beag/Ballyfermot Star
Respond Housing
SAFE Ireland
Saoirse Housing Association
SAOL Beag Children's Centre
Scouting Ireland
School of Education UCD
Sexual Violence Centre Cork
SIPTU
Simon Communities of Ireland
Social Care Ireland
Society of St. Vincent de Paul
SPHE Network
SpunOut.ie
St. Nicholas Montessori College
St. Nicholas Montessori Teachers' Association
St. Patrick's Mental Health Services
TASC
Teachers' Union of Ireland
Transgender Equality Network Ireland
The Ark, A Cultural Centre for Children
The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway
Traveller Visibility Group Ltd
Treoir
UNICEF Ireland
Women's Aid
Young Ballymun
Young Social Innovators
Youth Advocate Programme Ireland (YAP)
Youth Work Ireland

Introduction

The Children’s Rights Alliance unites over 130 members working together to make Ireland one of the best places in the world to be a child. We change the lives of all children by making sure their rights are respected and protected in our laws, policies and services. We also provide legal information and advice to children, young people and their families through our legal information line and nationwide legal advice outreach clinics.

Since March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and associated public health measures have had a significant and detrimental impact on the wellbeing of children and young people across Ireland particularly on those already experiencing disadvantage. In its initial analysis of the impact of the pandemic, the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) projected that, in the absence of economic growth and employment recovery, child poverty could increase to 22.6 per cent.¹

Despite this warning and the widespread impact of the pandemic on so many aspects of children’s lives, for the most part their voices have not been heard or their needs considered by decision-makers.² The Economic Recovery Plan, published in June 2021, has limited focus on children and young people with the few direct references limited to childcare in the context of labour market participation and gender equality.³

The Government’s commitment to adopt a wellbeing approach to budgeting is welcome and this framework should inform decision-making in relation to Budget 2022.⁴ As part of its approach, the Government should prioritise investment in services and supports which address the impact of the pandemic on children and young people’s lives as well as tackling systemic issues of child poverty and disadvantage. In addition, it must allocate increased funding to protect children online.

In Budget 2022, the Children’s Rights Alliance is calling on the Government to:

1. Invest in measures which align with the commitments contained in the EU Child Guarantee which Ireland and EU member states adopted in June 2021;
2. Target social welfare increases towards children in families experiencing the most disadvantage;
3. Invest in key services and supports to address the negative impact of the pandemic on children and young people;
4. Provide increased and sustained funding for schools given the exacerbation of educational disadvantage due to the pandemic; and,
5. Commit additional resources to the Garda National Protection Services Bureau in order to protect children online

¹ Regan, Mark and Bertrand Maitre ‘Child poverty in Ireland and the pandemic recession’ (ESRI 2020) <<https://bit.ly/3hjhAdQ>> accessed 10 September 2020.

² OCO (2021) *2020 Childhood Paused Ombudsman for Children Annual Report* < <https://bit.ly/3xKmtVU> > accessed 22 June 2021.

³ Government of Ireland *Economic Recovery Plan 2021* <https://bit.ly/3zBQBoz> accessed 15 June 2021.

⁴ Government of Ireland, *Budget 2021: Wellbeing and the Measurement of Broader Living Standards in Ireland*, (Government of Ireland, (Government of Ireland 2020) <> accessed 24 August 2021. <https://bit.ly/3zcZ8gJ>> accessed 24 August 2021.

Summary of Budget 2022 Asks

1. Invest in measures which align with the commitments contained in the EU Child Guarantee which Ireland and EU members states adopted in June 2021

Child Poverty Unit: Allocate **€3.5m** to a child poverty office in the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth which will also act as the Child Guarantee coordinator.

Hot School Meals: Ensure that all children have access to a hot nutritious meal every day in education settings by expanding the national programme on a phased basis. Allocate an additional **€10m** in Budget 2022 for hot meals and commit to further investment in subsequent budgets.

Early Years: Budget 2022 should allocate an additional **€75m** to invest in the early years workforce.

National Childcare Scheme: Unlock free childcare and afterschool care for children in lone parent and disadvantaged families.

2. Target increases in social welfare towards children in families experiencing the most disadvantage

Qualified Child Increase: Improve the living standards of those most at-risk-of-poverty and income inadequacy by increasing Qualified Child Increase (QCI) by €10 for children over 12 and by €3 per week for children under 12 at an approximate cost of **€112m**.

Payments for Children living in International Protection Accommodation: Increase the international protection payment for children to the same rates of the Qualified Child Increase (QCI).

3. Invest in key services and supports to address the negative impact of the pandemic on children and young people

Tusla, Child and Family Agency: Maintain existing funding and allocate an additional **€5 to 10m** to Tusla to address the increased need for support around early intervention, domestic abuse and waiting lists for family support services provided directly by Tusla and their partner organisations.

Youth Services: Allocate an additional **€10m** to Youth Services in order to support young people impacted by the pandemic.

Mental Health: Additional funding for mental health services should:

- Provide additional counselling and educational psychology training places through a collaborative partnership between the Departments of Health and Higher Education at a cost of approximately **€1.2m**.
- Fund an additional psychologist for children in each primary care centre at a cost of **€8m**.
- Support an additional 10 educational psychologist posts at a cost of **€0.75m**.

4. Provide increased and sustained funding for schools given the exacerbation of educational disadvantage due to the pandemic

Educational Welfare: Support children and young people experiencing educational disadvantaged and at risk of early school leaving by funding an additional 10 Home School Community Liaison (HSCCL) Coordinator positions at a cost of **€0.55m**. Restore funding for the School Completion programme to 2008 levels by allocating an additional **€8.75m**.

Capitation: Increase the capitation fee for both primary and secondary schools by 10 per cent at a cost of **€20.4m**.

School Books: Expand the primary school free schoolbook pilot scheme by investing an additional **€20m** as a first step towards the realisation of free access to education.

5. Commit additional resources to the Garda National Protection Services Bureau in order to protect children online

Online Safety: Increase the annual funding for the Garda National Protection Services Bureau by 10 per cent at a cost of approximately **€10m**.

Invest in measures to implement the EU Child Guarantee

Invest in a Child Poverty Office

Rationale: In June 2021, the European Commission adopted the Child Guarantee, a recommendation that aims to prevent and combat child poverty and social exclusion in the European Union (EU) by supporting the 27 Member States to make efforts to guarantee access to quality key services for children in need.⁵ The Guarantee requires Member States to work towards the implementation of six commitments to provide free access to early childhood education and care (ECEC); education (including school-based activities); a healthy meal each school day; and healthcare as well as ensuring effective access to healthy nutrition and adequate housing. In Ireland, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth will take lead on the implementation of the EU Child Guarantee.⁶

The Department has established an EU/International Unit which will act as the coordinator for the Child Guarantee.⁷ Budget 2022 should allocate additional funding to establish and fully resource a child poverty office to support government actions to meet the commitments in the Guarantee and to undertake broader actions on child poverty as part of a comprehensive national action plan on child poverty.⁸ The total proposed allocation includes a budget for events, publications and research.

Budget 2022 Ask: Allocate **€3.5m** to a child poverty office in the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth which will also act as the Child Guarantee coordinator.

Ensure all children receive a hot school meal

Rationale: Just over one in ten households with children in Ireland experience food poverty.⁹ This means that almost 80,000 households with children under 18 years¹⁰ cannot afford a meal with meat or vegetarian equivalent every other day; are unable to afford a weekly roast dinner; or miss one substantial meal.¹¹ Parents on the minimum wage have to spend almost a quarter of their income on food, and almost a third if they are dependent on social welfare payments.¹²

The introduction of a hot school meals pilot scheme in September 2019, with further funding provided in Budget 2020 and Budget 2021, has been a positive development in terms of addressing food poverty. The further expansion of this scheme would ensure that the objective of providing a healthy meal each school day under the EU Child Guarantee could be met.

The estimated cost of extending the scheme to all children currently benefitting from the School Meals Programme is €71 million.¹³ Given the positive feedback captured by the Department's report on the pilot

⁵ European Commission, Proposal for a Council Recommendation establishing the European Child Guarantee, Brussels, 24.3.2021 COM(2021) 137 final, 1

⁶ Information received by the Children's Rights Alliance as part of the Community and Voluntary Pillar from the Department of Social Protection, 26 May 2021

⁷ Minister of State, Joe O'Brien TD announced the EU/International Office at an event hosted by the Children's Rights Alliance on 24 May 2021.

⁸ In New Zealand the Child Poverty unit consists of six staff members. Correspondence with the New Zealand Child Poverty Unit at the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

⁹ Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection, *Social Inclusion Monitor 2016*, (Dublin 2018).

¹⁰ Calculated using Central Statistics Office, *Census 2016 Profile 4 – Households and Families* (CSO 2017).

¹¹ Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, *Social Inclusion Monitor 2016*, <https://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/SIM2016.pdf> (accessed 7 June 2020).

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Heather Humphreys TD, Written Answers, Social Welfare Benefits, 17 June 2021 [31170/21; 31171/ 21].

scheme,¹⁴ the Department should incrementally invest additional funding to expand the availability of hot school meals to all children benefiting from the School Meals Programme.

Budget 2022 Ask: Ensure that all children have access to a hot nutritious meal every day in education settings by expanding the national programme on a phased basis. Allocate an additional **€10m** in Budget 2022 for hot meals and commit to further investment in subsequent budgets.

Introduce significant funding for Early Childhood Care and Education

Rationale: Ireland currently deploys a market-based model of early childhood education and care using state subsidies, capitation and regulation, rather than a public model of funding and provision. In market systems, market forces and consumerist approaches often shape the provision of formal early childhood education and care¹⁵ meaning that there may not be a consistent approach to ECEC employed in all settings.

Public spending on early childhood education and care is currently second lowest in the Organisation on Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), amounting to less than 0.5 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).¹⁶ At present, the State provides subsidies directly to all providers of childcare services in an attempt to reduce the financial cost for parents and carers availing of services at market prices.¹⁷ Public funding is only provided for programmes offered through providers registered with Tusla, the Child and Family Agency.

To have a positive impact on child development, early childhood education and care (ECEC) services must be high-quality and safe. Developing the workforce in childcare services is central to the delivery of high quality experiences and environments for young children.¹⁸ The overwhelming consensus across research is that the role of the teacher/educator is of primary significance: the pedagogy initiated by the teacher is central to quality.¹⁹ However, International experience is that there has to be a clear 'earnings-return to being qualified', as if there is no change, or even a decline, there is no incentive for qualified individuals to stay, enter or re-enter the ECEC sector.²⁰

Governments in countries like Ireland with ECEC services delivered by publicly-funded private providers have had to find ways to directly improve the pay of educators.

In March 2020, at the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic, a number of measures were introduced to support the early learning and care and school aged childcare sectors.²¹ This included measures to cover wages and operational costs during closures. Over the course of a 56 week period the total amount invested in subsidising the wages for the sector was approximately €430 million.

Budget 2022 Ask: Budget 2022 should allocate an additional **€75m** to invest in the early years workforce.

¹⁴ Ian McShane and Rachael Joyce (2020) *Hot School Meals Pilot Project* <https://bit.ly/3zCQf0R> accessed 21 June 2021.

¹⁵ Martha Friendly, 'A bad bargain for us all: Why the market doesn't deliver child care that works for Canadian children and families' (Childcare Resource and Research Unit, May 2019), 5

¹⁶ OECD, 'OECD Family database PF3.1: Public spending on childcare and early education' accessed 21 January 2021.

¹⁷ See Government of Ireland, 'National Childcare Scheme', <https://bit.ly/3mso7aN> accessed 4 February 2021.

¹⁸ Department of Education and Skills, *Developing the workforce in the early childhood care and education sector: Background discussion paper* (2009 DES) 1.

¹⁹ Carmen Dalli, E. Jayne White, Jean Rockel, Iris Duhn with Emma Buchanan, Susan Davidson, Sarah Ganly, Larissa Kus, and Bo Wang, *Quality early childhood education for under-two-year-olds: What should it look like? A literature review – report to the Ministry of Education* (Victoria University of Wellington 2011) 3.

²⁰ Gillian Paul, 'Childcare markets and government intervention', Eva Lloyd and Helen Penn (eds) *Childcare Markets: Can They Deliver An Equitable Service?* (Policy Press 2013).

²¹ Early Childhood Ireland, *Dealing with the pandemic: The case of early years and school age childcare providers in Ireland* <<https://bit.ly/2UbrB7K>> (ECI 2020) accessed 16 July 2021.

Provide greater access to early childhood education care for lone parent and disadvantaged families

The introduction of the National Childcare Scheme (NCS) in 2019 represented a first step towards reform of the childcare system by streamlining all existing subsidies, except the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme, into one claim process. However, the scheme is failing to meet the needs of children from low-income families, particularly children in very disadvantaged circumstances where no parent is in work, education or training.²² Budget 2022 should expand the existing provisions of this scheme in order to ensure that the commitment under the EU Child Guarantee can be realised.

Budget 2022 Ask: Unlock free childcare and afterschool care for children in lone parent and disadvantaged families.

Target social welfare increases towards children in families experiencing the most disadvantage

Increase targeted child income supports

Rationale: The widespread loss of income, through unemployment, due to the pandemic, has been concentrated among low earners and this increased financial strain is predicted to affect children's wellbeing.²³ Amongst the children in need identified in the Child Guarantee are those at risk of poverty and those with a minority racial or ethnic background. Budget 2022 should prioritise increased social welfare support for children in these categories.

Adequate social welfare rates that address the changing needs of a child are vital to ensuring their basic needs are met. Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL) research has consistently identified older children as having additional and distinct needs in comparison to younger children.²⁴ The minimum needs of children aged 12 and over, cost over €120 per week, which is 63 per cent more expensive than the minimum needs of younger children.²⁵ Proportionate increases for children under 12 are also needed to allow for inflation and the increase in the cost of living. While the increases provided to the Qualified Child Increase (QCI) in Budget 2021 are welcome further increases are needed as families dependent on social welfare continue to experience poverty due to inadequate income.²⁶

Budget 2022 Ask: Improve the living standards of those most at-risk-of-poverty and income inadequacy by increasing Qualified Child Increase (QCI) by €10 for children over 12 and by €3 per week for children under 12 at an approximate cost of €112m.²⁷

²²Holland, K. 'Thousands of State's Poorest Children Face Losing After-School Childcare Place', *The Irish Times* (Dublin, 11 September 2021).

²³Meirike Darmody, Emer Smyth and Helen Russell (2020) *The implications of the Covid-19 pandemic for policy in relation to children and young people: A research review*. ESRI 2020 < <https://bit.ly/33kVJ0J> > accessed 12 September 2020.

²⁴Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice, *MESL 2018: Update Report*, (VPSJ 2018) 11.

²⁵Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice, *Minimum Essential Standard of Living 2019* (VPSJ 2019)

²⁶ Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice *Budget 2021 MESL Impact Briefing*, (VPSJ 2020).

²⁷ The cost of increasing the Qualified Child Increase by €10 for the over 12s is approximately €76 million and by €3 for children under 12 is €36 million. The cost is calculated based on the response to a parliamentary question put to the Minister in July 2020. Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Heather Humphreys TD, Written Answers, Qualified Child Allowance, 30 July 2020 [19999/21; 20000/ 21].

Introduce the International Protection Child Payment

Rationale: Children living in Direct Provision centres are at a high risk of consistent poverty although they are not counted in the official poverty statistics. Recent budget increases to the rate of the weekly Direct Provision allowance for children, in line with the 2015 McMahon Report recommendation,²⁸ made a positive impact on the incomes of these families. However, at the time of the McMahon report, the recommendation equated to the rate of Qualified Child Increase (QCI) and subsequent increases to this payment were not extended to children in Direct Provision.²⁹ Budget 2022 should

The publication of *A White Paper to End Direct Provision and to Establish a New International Protection Support Service* earlier this year includes recommendations around the introduction of income supports for families seeking asylum.³⁰ The commitment to introduce an International Protection Child Payment means that for the first time, in more than 20 years, children in the protection process will be treated equally to other children living in Ireland who get a Child Benefit payment every month. To move towards increasing this payment, this year we need to see an increase in the payment to at least the same levels as the Qualified Child Increase.

Budget 2022 Ask: Increase the international protection payment for children to the same rates of the Qualified Child Increase (QCI).

Invest in key services and supports to address the negative impact of the pandemic on children and young people

Increase investment in Tusla and related support services

Rationale: The primary response by the Irish Government to the pandemic has been to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and to protect livelihoods.³¹ From the outset, the Government stated that people should remain at home unless they were undertaking essential tasks or working in essential services.³² While remaining at home was necessary to stop the spread of the virus, for some children and young people this has meant being exposed to increased harm.

The closure of early years services, schools, and youth service has meant that concerns about children at risk were likely to be unreported, a fact borne out by the fall off in referrals to Tusla during the initial school

²⁸ At the time of the McMahon report, the recommendation equated to the rate of Qualified Child Increase (QCI). Notably, Budget 2019 increased the Qualified Child Increase rate to €34 (children under the age of 12) and €37 (children over the age of 12) for children of other social welfare recipients. Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, 'Budget 2019' accessed 17 July 2020.

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ Government of Ireland (2021) *A White Paper to End Direct Provision and to Establish a New International Protection Support Service* <https://bit.ly/3d2DL96> accessed 22 June 2021.

³¹ Houses of the Oireachtas, *Final Report of the Special Committee on COVID-19 response*, (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2020), <https://bit.ly/3myqY1Q>, 11

³² Government of Ireland, 'Post Cabinet Statement, An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar', *merrionstreet.ie* (24 March 2020) <https://bit.ly/3aton41> accessed 6 October 2021.

closure in March 2020.³³ The Ombudsman for Children's Office has also reported a reduction in the number of referrals it received in 2020 in relation to child protection, many in the context of its complaints.³⁴

The impact of school closures and social distancing on vulnerable young people means that many have been 'cut off access to key protective factors for their mental health/well-being'.³⁵ Organisations delivering family support services have observed an increased need for their services. The crisis situation created due to the wider effects of the pandemic has meant that many families in receipt of family support services are engaging with these services for longer.³⁶ Domestic violence organisations have reported an increase in the number of women and children accessing their services³⁷ and have termed this demand as 'the shadow pandemic'.³⁸ Increased exposure to parental alcohol consumption during periods of lockdown has exacerbated feelings of isolation amongst young people.³⁹

Budget 2021 provided a welcome increase in funding of €61m for Tusla after years of underinvestment. Given the increased need for services provided by the agency and its partners, it is critical that Tusla's funding is maintained at this level along with an allocation of additional resources to deal with increased demand.

Budget 2022 Ask: Maintain existing funding and allocate an additional **€5-10m** to Tusla to address the increased need for support around early intervention, domestic abuse and waiting lists for family support services provided directly by Tusla

Increase Support for Youth Services

Rationale: An analysis of the age profile of those in consistent poverty from the 2018 SILC data found that young adults (aged 18-24) had a consistent poverty rate of seven per cent. It is estimated that 29,000 young adults are living in consistent poverty in Ireland.⁴⁰ The *EU Recommendation on Investing in Children* recommends that the State provide opportunities to participate in informal activities that take place outside the home and after regular school hours.⁴¹

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on the health and well-being of young people, particularly those experiencing disadvantage.⁴² Young people have reported feelings of loneliness and isolation, missing friends and relatives and a reduction in access to services due to the pandemic.⁴³ With increased unemployment amongst this cohort along with a severe disruption to education it is critical that additional

³³ The Child Care Law Reporting Project, Observations on Concerns for Vulnerable Children Arising from the Covid-19 Pandemic <<https://bit.ly/3qjBv1J>> accessed 12 February 2021. In one stark example, a child was hospitalised with infections caused by a head lice infestation as the staff did not have any contact with the child when classes went online and were not able to intervene at an early stage like they had in the past. Shauna Bowers, 'Covid-19 resulted in decrease of child welfare referrals to Tusla' The Irish Times (Dublin 5 August 2020).

³⁴ [Annual Report en.pdf \(oco.ie\)](#) Ombudsman for Children, 2020 *Childhood Paused: Ombudsman for Children's Office Annual Report*, (OCO 2021).

³⁵ National Educational Psychological Service, *The Wellbeing and Mental Health of Young People in Ireland: Factors for Consideration for the Leaving Certificate Examination in the context of the Covid-19 Pandemic: Advice from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)* (Department of Education and Skills & NEPS 2020)

³⁶ Barnardos, 'Increase in referrals to intensive family support services in 2020' (9 June 2021) <<https://bit.ly/3v7vRRT>> accessed 10 June 2021.

³⁷ Womens Aid, *Annual Impact Report 2020* (Women's Aid 2020) <https://bit.ly/3Bi8Orn> accessed 6 October 2021;

³⁸ Safe Ireland, *Tracking the Shadow Pandemic*, (Safe Ireland, 2020).

³⁹ Alcohol Action Ireland and Dun Laoghaire Drug and Alcohol Taskforce, *Hidden Harm and Covid-19 Exploring the Impacts and Solutions*, (AAI & DLR DAT, 2020) <https://bit.ly/2YzkojL> accessed 6 October 2021.

⁴⁰ Department of Children and Youth Affairs, *Income, poverty and deprivation among children: A statistical baseline analysis* (DCYA 2020).

⁴¹ European Commission, *Commission Recommendation of 20.2.2013: Investing in children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage* (Brussels, 20.2.2013 C(2013) 778 final)

⁴² Department of Children and Youth Affairs, *How's your head? Young voices during Covid 19. Report of a national consultation with young people on mental health and wellbeing* (DCYA 2020).

⁴³ *ibid.*

funding is provided for youth services. Youth services have been proven to ameliorate the effects of poverty among young people.⁴⁴ In particular youth services can offer the opportunity to remedy a cycle of intergenerational poverty.

Budget 2022 Ask: Allocate an additional **€10m** to Youth Services in order to support young people impacted by the pandemic.

Provide greater investment in mental health and wellbeing services

Rationale: There is a wide range of evidence available that indicates that children and young people have had increased mental health issues during the pandemic. An analysis of presentations at paediatric emergency departments in Dublin found that there was an increase in the number of children attending due to mental health concerns in the second half of 2020.⁴⁵ Surveys conducted by other services have indicated that there is a need to address increased levels of anxiety, stress and depression by schools and other services.⁴⁶

An additional €4m investment in primary care psychology in August 2021 is welcome and will provide much needed interventions for children and young people waiting over 12 months for a first appointment.⁴⁷ One of the challenges in meeting the demand for services is the limited number of newly qualified psychologists that graduate each year.⁴⁸ The Psychological Society of Ireland estimates that a modest investment of €1.2m would help increase the workforce by providing funding for trainees qualifying in educational and counselling psychology.⁴⁹ In the interim qualification period, these individuals would work under supervision and increase capacity within existing public services.

In the context of a Wellbeing Budget, the Government should target increased resources towards interventions that support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.

Budget 2022 Ask: Additional funding for mental health services should:

- Provide additional counselling and educational psychology training places through a collaborative partnership between the Departments of Health and Higher Education at a cost of approximately **€1.2m**.
- Fund an additional psychologist in each primary care centre for children at a cost of **€8m**.
- Support an additional 10 educational psychologist posts at a cost of **€0.75m**.

⁴⁴ European Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010 – 2018), OJ C 311, 19.12.2009

⁴⁵ McDonnell, et. al. 'Increased Mental Health Presentations by Children Aged 5-15 at Emergency Departments During the First 12 Months of COVID-19', *Irish Medical Journal* Vol. 114 (5).

⁴⁶ Merike Darmody, Emer Smyth and Helen Russell, *The implications of the Covid-19 pandemic for policy in relation to children and young people: A research review* (ESRI 2020) <<https://bit.ly/33kVJ0J>> accessed 12 September 2020.

⁴⁷ Department of Health, 'Minister for Mental Health and Older People, Mary Butler TD announces the approval of €4 million to reduce the Primary Care Psychology waiting list', (4 August 2021) <<https://bit.ly/2ZXz24J>> accessed 6 October 2021.

⁴⁸ Psychology Society of Ireland, *Pre-Budget Submission 2022: Increasing Access to High Quality and Agile Psychological Services*, (PSI 2021) <https://bit.ly/3idCazR> accessed 29 September 2021.

⁴⁹ Psychology Society of Ireland, *Pre-Budget Submission 2022: Increasing Access to High Quality and Agile Psychological Services*, (PSI 2021) <https://bit.ly/3idCazR> accessed 29 September 2021.

Provide increased and sustained funding for schools

Increase funding to tackle the impact of the pandemic on school retention

Education has the power to transform lives, lift people out of poverty and break down cycles of disadvantage.⁵⁰ Participating fully in education can be challenging for many children and young people living in low-income households.⁵¹ Supporting educational retention, attainment and progression for all children is crucial to ensure that all children and young people to reach their potential.

The Society of St Vincent DePaul (SVP) have observed that many children and young people living in poverty were unable to keep up with their schoolwork throughout the pandemic as they did not have space or the right technology for online learning.⁵² Children and young people who were already at risk of disengaging with education, are at greater risk of falling further behind due to the impact of the pandemic. Attention is urgently needed to address educational inequalities which were present before the pandemic, and which are likely to have been exacerbated due to the extended school closures. Learning loss, educational underachievement, student disengagement, challenges of retention and meeting the needs of children and young people with special educational needs remain a challenge.⁵³ In its *Statement of Strategy 2021-2023*, the Department of Education has committed to '[s]upporting school communities through and post Covid-19 to enable continuity of education and assessment, and to help alleviate the impact of Covid-19 especially for those students at risk of educational disadvantage'.⁵⁴ Budget 2022 should support the realisation of this commitment by increasing funding for Home School Community Liaison Coordinators and for the School Completion programme.

Budget 2022 Ask: Support children and young people experiencing educational disadvantaged and at risk of early school leaving by funding an additional 10 Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Coordinator positions at a cost of **€0.55m**. Restore funding for the School Completion programme to 2008 levels by allocating an additional **€8.75m**.

Increase capitation fees for schools

Rationale: Cuts in educational expenditure during the recession impacted on the general capacity of primary and post-primary schools to respond to the particular needs of disadvantaged pupils. Measures have been taken to restore approximately 40 per cent of the capitation grant to the 2010 levels with budget increases provided for in Budgets 2019 and 2020.⁵⁵ However, while these increases are welcome, they do not go far enough in terms of meeting the costs incurred by schools. Ireland is placed at the bottom of an OECD comparison on the proportion of wealth spent on education.⁵⁶ It is estimated a shortfall of €46m in funding, for basic overhead costs, is made up each year through the support of parents and local communities.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection *Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025* (DEASP 2020).

⁵¹ Joint Committee on Education and Skills, *Report on education inequality and disadvantage and barriers to education* (Houses of the Oireachtas 2019) <<https://bit.ly/33k4OXz>> accessed 11 September 2020.

⁵² Society of St Vincent DePaul, *Mitigating the Impact of School Closures on Disadvantaged Students* (National Social Justice Committee 2021) <<https://bit.ly/3tR0Diq>> accessed 12 February 2021, 2.

⁵³ Merike Darmody, Emer Smyth and Helen Russell, *The implications of the Covid-19 pandemic for policy in relation to children and young people: A research review*, (ESRI 2020) <<https://bit.ly/33kVJ0J>> accessed 12 September 2020.

⁵⁴ Department of Education, *Statement of Strategy 2021-2023*, (Department of Education 2021) 18.

⁵⁵ Budget 2019 provided for a five per cent increase in capitation funding and Budget 2020 provided for a further two and a half per cent increase.

⁵⁶ Teachers Union of Ireland, *Budget 2022 must address shameful neglect of education system – TUI* (TUI 2021) <<https://bit.ly/39LbPod>> accessed 29 September 2021.

⁵⁷ INTO, *Budget 2022 Fund our Schools*, (INTO 2021) <<https://bit.ly/39L0ULc>> accessed 29 September 2021.

At a recent event hosted by the [Children's Futures campaign](#) one school principal highlighted that their school would face a deficit of €20,000 at the end of the year. Budget 2022 should prioritise increased funding for schools to help meet the EU Child Guarantee commitment to tackle the financial barriers to accessing education.

Budget 2022 Ask: Increase the capitation fee for both primary and secondary schools by 10 per cent at a cost of **€20.4m**.⁵⁸

Provide free access to education materials

Rationale: Perhaps the most significant impact of the pandemic on the lives of children and young people has been the enforced closure of schools. The closure of schools has exacerbated pre-existing social and educational inequalities and the move to learning online will have the biggest impact on disadvantaged children, making it harder for them to 'catch up'.⁵⁹ School costs continue to place a financial strain on low-income households. Just under half of parents at primary level are able to meet the costs of returning to school out of their regular household budget, while only one third of parents at second level can do likewise.⁶⁰ It is estimated that it would cost an additional €103 million annually to deliver free primary education and €127 million to deliver free second level education to every child and young person in Ireland.⁶¹

Budget 2022 Ask: Expand the primary school free schoolbook pilot scheme by investing an additional **€20m** as a first step towards the realisation of free access to education.

Commit additional resources to protect children online

Rationale: Over the course of the pandemic, there has been a significant increase in child sexual abuse material. Hotline.ie reported a 142 per cent increase in material in 2020, with one in two child sexual abuse sources including video content, a 55 per cent increase from 2019.⁶² The volume of material warrants further investment from the State to ensure children and young people are protected online. However, we know that cases involving distribution of child abuse material are taking up to 10 years for the State to complete, with the problem deteriorating in the last year.⁶³ These delays are caused by a number of factors including the number of devices which need to be seized, a lack of Garda capacity to deal with devices with sophisticated encryption,⁶⁴ delays in acting on tip offs from foreign police and in sending seized devices to the bureau for examination. Delays are reported at every stage in the process including taking victim statements, arresting or interviewing suspects and sending the file to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.⁶⁵

Budget 2022 Ask: Increase the annual funding for the Garda National Protection Services Bureau by 10 per cent at a cost of approximately **€10m**.

⁵⁸ Social Justice Ireland, *Budget Choices Delivering a Fair Recovery* [budgetchoices2022fulldocument.pdf \(socialjustice.ie\)](#)

⁵⁹ Merike Darmody, Emer Smyth And Helen Russell, *The Implications Of The Covid-19 Pandemic For Policy In Relation To Children And Young People* (ESRI 2020) <<https://bit.ly/3jHSh3>> accessed 12 February 2021, 41.

⁶⁰ Barnardos *The real cost of school 2020 Back to School Briefing Paper* (2020) <<https://bit.ly/3bTtES1>> accessed 22 September 2021.

⁶¹ Barnardos *The real cost of school 2020 Back to School Briefing Paper* (2020) <<https://bit.ly/3bTtES1>> accessed 22 September 2021, 31.

⁶² Hotline.ie, *Break the Cycle One Report at a Time - Annual Report 2020*, (Hotline.ie 2021) available <<https://bit.ly/3DfsH31>> accessed 6 October 2021.

⁶³ Conor Gallagher, 'Delays to child porn inquiries put abused at further risk, Cases taking up to 10 years as technological and data issues impede prosecutions', *The Irish Times*, (Dublin 7 January 2020), <https://bit.ly/3adl8MG> accessed 5 February 2020.

⁶⁴ Conor Gallagher, 'Backlogs a dangerous flaw in child porn and abuse inquiries Resource and Data leave perpetrator at large – and child vulnerable to further abuse', *The Irish Times*, (Dublin 7 January 2020) <https://bit.ly/3BcMCit> accessed 5th February 2020.

⁶⁵ Garda Inspectorate *Responding to Child Sexual Abuse, A Follow Up Review from the Garda Inspectorate*, (Garda Inspectorate, 2017) <https://bit.ly/3oEzA9W> accessed 6 October 2021.

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