



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

# First Progress Report of the Child Poverty and Well-being Programme Office





# **Child Poverty and Well-Being in Transition: Learning and Adapting to Accelerate Change in Children's Lives**

First Progress Report of the  
Child Poverty and Well-Being  
Programme Office

Department of the Taoiseach  
Child Poverty and Well-being Programme Office  
[gov.ie/childpoverty](http://gov.ie/childpoverty)



**Rialtas na hÉireann**  
Government of Ireland

February 2025



In 2023 approximately  
**175,000** children in Ireland  
lived in households that were  
at-risk-of-poverty.



# Taoiseach's Foreword



**All children deserve to be happy, healthy, have their material and emotional needs met, and be provided with the opportunity to realise their full potential.**

I believe that this can be a reality for all children in the State and that we can make Ireland the best country in Europe to be a child.

Central to achieving this is ending child poverty and promoting child well-being.

The Child Poverty and Well-being Programme Office was established in the Department of the Taoiseach in Spring 2023 to help to prioritise action across government in areas that will have the greatest impact for children and families experiencing poverty. The Office published its initial Programme Plan *From Poverty to Potential* in August 2023.

This first progress report of the Programme Office, which I am delighted to publish, documents progress made in the first half of the year. This report aims not only to describe the activity of the Office and wider developments across government, but seeks to capture the learning and challenges, so that we can continue to focus, accelerate and innovate to realise our ambition of eliminating child poverty.

Of particular significance in the first year was an increased focus on child poverty in the 2024 and 2025 annual Budget process. This was the first time the Government coordinated spending plans on child poverty, and through both the once-off cost-of-living package and permanent changes resulted in approximately 22,000 fewer children at risk of poverty.

Key achievements for the Office also include establishing a Cross-Government Network on Child Poverty and Well-being that brings together the wide range of actors across government departments and their agencies working in this area. We also hosted the inaugural Child Poverty and Well-being Summit, which promoted the focus on child poverty among government and other relevant stakeholders.

Having seen the emergence of a genuinely cross-government enhanced focus on child poverty over the last year and a half, I am heartened that this initiative to drive the focus from the centre of government is working. I know there is more to do, and through the new Programme for Government we will build on these foundations and work even harder to make sure every child is happy and has what they need to thrive.

**Micheál Martin T.D.**

*Taoiseach*

# Child Friendly Summary

**In 2023, a special team called the *Child Poverty and Well-being Programme Office* was created to help children in Ireland who don't have enough money or support to live happy, healthy lives. This team works with lots of different parts of the Government to find ways to make things better for children and their families.**

The team made a plan called *From Poverty to Potential*, which focuses on six important areas to support families and children:

- 1** Help families who need more money and make sure they have enough to buy what they need.
- 2** Make sure there are enough spaces in crèches, playschools and afterschool clubs where kids can go to play, learn, make friends and have fun.
- 3** Make it easier for families to buy things that children need for school like books, lunches and uniforms.
- 4** Make sure that every child has a home and to stop families from becoming homeless. We want to make sure that homeless families can get a new home as soon as possible.
- 5** All children are different, and they need different things. We want families to be able to easily find out who can help them. Sometimes it can be hard for families to get the help they need because different services are not working together. We want to change that.
- 6** Help children take part in activities outside of school like art, music and sports without worrying about how much it costs.

The Programme Office has two main jobs:

## 1. Check progress:

They make sure that government plans in these six areas are actually happening and working.

## 2. Come up with new ideas:

They try to find new ways to support families and children.

The Programme Office is part of a larger plan called *Young Ireland (2023-2028)*, which looks at all the things that happen in children's lives.

The Programme Office works with Ministers and their government offices to give special attention to children and families who need extra help.

The Team writes reports to share what is working what is not working and what they are learning. This helps them and others get better at supporting children. The team asks people in the government who work in these areas to answer questions about their work. They also listen to children and families to understand their needs. This helps the team focus on real problems and find solutions that make a difference.

This report is about what has happened in the first year or so of the Programme Plan. This report shows that families have been supported to pay for the things children need and that there have been important new services for children like providing schoolbooks and crèche places. It talks about how the Government is trying to help all families but importantly how it is trying to support those who need the most help.

By working together with lots of people, the Programme Office is trying to make life better for children who need support, helping them grow, learn, and reach their dreams. We think our work is making a difference, but we know there is still a lot more work to do.



# Executive Summary

## Introduction and overview

The Child Poverty and Well-being Programme Office was established within the Department of the Taoiseach in Spring 2023 to drive cross-government action aimed at improving outcomes for children and families experiencing poverty. In August 2023, the Office published its initial Programme Plan, *From Poverty to Potential*, which set out key priorities for addressing child poverty and well-being.

As part of this plan, the Office committed to producing an annual report to track progress and highlight priority areas for the coming years. This report fulfills that commitment, offering an overview of progress while emphasising the multifaceted nature of the government's response to child poverty. Beyond being a progress update, this document also serves as a tool for reflection and learning for all stakeholders working to improve children's lives.

The report is structured in two parts. Part One provides an update on the six priority areas identified in the Programme Plan, concluding with an examination of the challenges and lessons learned in supporting children at risk of poverty. Part Two focuses on the contributions of the Programme Office, detailing its strategic initiatives and its ongoing work to support government efforts. This Part ends by assessing the Office's role in strengthening the focus on child poverty and identifying key lessons for its future evolution.

**Figure 1: Six priority areas identified in the Initial Programme Plan**



## Part 1: Cross-government update on six priority areas

Part 1 of the report is organised around the six priority areas identified in *From Poverty to Potential* (Figure 1). These priorities were selected for their potential to drive meaningful change for families and children experiencing poverty. Each section begins by providing context and presenting relevant data on the circumstances of children in relation to the key themes (Figure 2). The second part of each section highlights significant developments since August 2023, drawn from feedback from 39 units across 13 government departments.

The purpose of this update is to capture key developments during the first year or so of the Programme Office, assess progress, and promote learning and reflection on the necessary changes, evolutions, and future directions.

**Income supports** are among the most direct measures to reduce child poverty. Ireland has a robust social transfer system, which has been strengthened through increases in targeted supports such as the ICQ/Child Support Payment and the Working Family Payment (WFP). In addition, some once-off measures were aimed at children and have been shown to reduce the number of children at risk of poverty during the cost-of-living crisis (UNICEF, 2023). There is a risk that once-off measures, both targeted and universal, will have only a temporary ameliorating impact on poverty rates if not followed by longer-term measures. However, income support is just one element of a broader social infrastructure designed to prevent child poverty and mitigate its impact on children's outcomes.

In order to ensure that children most at risk of exclusion can access high-quality **Early Learning and Care**, the Government launched *Equal Start* and expanded the *Access and Inclusion Model*, while also improving the affordability of the *National Childcare Scheme*. **Education** initiatives, including the expansion of school meals and free schoolbooks, have promoted educational inclusion and reduced costs for parents.

The development of *Creative Youth 2023-2027* builds on existing initiatives and enhances opportunities, including in sport, for children and young people to **participate in extracurricular activities**. Additionally, several initiatives have been introduced to support families in **accessing services** when and where they need them. These include the expansion of the *National Home Visiting Programme* and the rollout of four *Local Child Poverty pilots*.

## Challenges and Future Orientation

In providing updates on key developments, departments were also asked to highlight the challenges they face in achieving the goal of eliminating child poverty and supporting child well-being. Six consistent themes were identified across the responses:

- **Enhancing Family Support Services:** There is a need to strengthen family support services to ensure vulnerable families and children can fully access and benefit from available supports.
- **Targeted Engagement with Excluded Groups:** More focused and tailored engagement is required to reach the most excluded groups, ensuring they are not overlooked in policy and service delivery.
- **Addressing the Complex Nature of Poverty:** The ongoing challenge of responding to the complex and multidimensional nature of childhood and family poverty persists. The interdependence of income, social exclusion, and housing continues to complicate service delivery.
- **Coordinating Government Policy:** While coordinating government policy has been a priority, it remains a challenging area that has not yet been adequately managed.
- **Workforce Challenges:** While workforce shortages are a broader feature of the growing economy and labour market, as well as social pressures like housing costs, these challenges are particularly problematic within children's services.
- **Resource Allocation and Planning:** There is a need to provide adequate resources to meet demand, alongside supporting multi-annual project planning, especially in the context of annual budget allocations.

Several responses highlighted that **family homelessness** exemplifies the cross-government challenges outlined above. The family support needs of homeless children are complex and multifaceted. There are wider economic challenges in terms of delivering sufficient housing in both the social housing and private rental sectors. Demand for family hubs exceeds supply, and there is a growing population of families who require not only enhanced prevention, homelessness exit, and tenancy sustainment supports but also more effective services while they remain homeless.

Figure 2: Selected indicators on child poverty and child well-being



## Part 2: Work of the Programme Office

The overall ambition of the Programme Office is to bring greater coherence and integration to government action aimed at addressing child poverty. This part of the Progress Report summarises the work of the Programme Office during its first year and a half of operation. In addition to monitoring progress across the six priority areas described in Part 1, the Programme Office has worked to enhance cross-government action. This part of the report outlines the Programme Office's activities across three key sections. The first section highlights the Office's role as a system convenor, fostering connections within government and broader society to engage stakeholders in the shared mission to end child poverty and promote child well-being. The second section reviews progress on the four strategic initiatives outlined in the initial Programme Plan. Finally, the report reflects on emerging lessons from the Office's work and considers priorities for the future.

**Building Connections:** A core objective of the Programme Office is to strengthen the cross-government response to child poverty by fostering interconnections and building momentum. It achieves this by profiling existing practices and encouraging key stakeholders to elevate their ambition. Building these connections is crucial for increasing the visibility of the collective government effort to combat child poverty. Key actions include:

- Five meetings of the **Cross-Government Network** on Child Poverty and Well-Being were organised. These meetings draw together stakeholders across the government system to address key topics of interest and to build networks and cooperation. These meetings consistently book out within days and are highly regarded.
- The Taoiseach hosted the inaugural **Child Poverty and Well-being Summit** at Dublin Castle on 23rd May 2024. The conference included a key now address by the Right Honourable Gordon Brown and attracted over 200 participants from across government and the C&V sector. Child participation was a key feature of the day and stakeholders worked together to tackle some of the most significant challenges in 17 case clinics.

**Strategic Initiatives:** The Programme Plan identifies four activity areas where the Programme Office can work to enhance the overall cross-government response to child poverty. These strategic initiatives address barriers or challenges which are commonly experienced by policy-makers and service providers, and which undermine action in different sectoral areas.

These strategic initiatives may contribute to unlocking the potential of existing investment, by enhancing capacity for action.

- Drawing on international experience, a key objective of the Programme Office is to ensure a heightened focus on child poverty in the **annual Budget process**. This included the preparation of two cross-government Budget reports.
- The Office has initiated a change programme focused on **service integration**, which has included convening a network meeting on service integration, collaborating with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to develop four local area child poverty plans, showcasing innovative practices, developing a research proposal with DCEDIY and the Department of Education on school-based service integration, and working with the Central Statistics Office (CSO) to explore how administrative data can support integration.
- The Office has also sought to strengthen existing **policy development tools** to ensure they are responsive to children's needs and child poverty.
- Furthermore, the Office has begun exploring the potential for greater cross-government coherence on children's services **workforce planning**.

## Impact of the Programme Office

To reflect on and take stock of its first year and a half, the Programme Office sought feedback from colleagues across government on its performance, specifically regarding how it has supported their work and enhanced cross-government action. A short anonymous survey was distributed to all government departments and 19 responses were received. 60% of departmental respondents agreed that, in its first year, the Programme Office *"has led to greater cross-government collaboration and policy cohesion"*. One respondent remarked, *"Without the existence of the Programme Office, my unit's work would have a much lower profile"*. Another respondent emphasised the symbolic importance of the Office, noting that its existence *"indicates that the well-being of children is a key priority for the Government"*. Respondents also suggested that the Office should continue to strengthen its network and expand its reach within government departments, ensuring that all stakeholders are fully aware of its work and the need to prioritise child poverty.

The key ways in which the Programme Office has added value in its first year and a half are:

- 1 Highlighting political commitment and creating the context for new and innovative responses to emerge.
- 2 Enhancing the visibility and profile of existing responses to child poverty, in particular highlighting the complex nature of poverty and the multi-dimensional nature of the government response to child poverty.
- 3 Convening opportunities for cross-government learning about what is working and what is not and enhancing interconnections and cooperation.
- 4 Providing a focal point for action on some of the key cross-government challenges.
- 5 Providing expertise and system wide analysis which strengthens policy development and implementation.

## Conclusions and next steps

This report reflects a broader ambition to not only sharpen the focus on child poverty but also critically evaluate and reimagine the strategies used to address it. It seeks to foster cross-government learning while addressing the inherent complexities and interdependencies involved in tackling child poverty. Looking ahead to 2025, the Programme Office will continue to monitor progress, address challenges, and grow the national coordinated effort to improve the lives of children and their families and communities. This learning will inform the development of the Programme Office second Programme Plan which is due at the end of 2025.

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# Acronyms

<b>ABC</b>	Area Based Childhood Programme
<b>AIM</b>	Access and Inclusion Model
<b>AROPE</b>	At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion
<b>ASF</b>	Active School Flag
<b>BLAST</b>	Bringing Live Arts to Students & Teachers
<b>CAMHS</b>	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
<b>CDNT</b>	Children's Disability Network Teams
<b>CGN</b>	Cross-Government Network
<b>CPW</b>	Child Poverty and Well-being
<b>CPWPO</b>	Child Poverty and Well-being Programme Office
<b>CSMB</b>	Civil Service Management Board
<b>CSO</b>	Central Statistics Office
<b>CSP</b>	Community Services Programme
<b>CYP</b>	Creative Youth Plan
<b>CYPSC</b>	Children and Young People's Services Committee
<b>D/CEDIY</b>	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
<b>D/ECC</b>	Department of Environment, Climate and Communications
<b>D/Education</b>	Department of Education
<b>D/ETE</b>	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
<b>D/FHERIS</b>	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
<b>D/Health</b>	Department of Health
<b>D/HLGH</b>	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
<b>D/Justice</b>	Department of Justice
<b>D/PENDR</b>	Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform
<b>D/RCD</b>	Department of Rural and Community Development
<b>D/SP</b>	Department of Social Protection
<b>D/TCAGSM</b>	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media

<b>D/Transport</b>	Department of Transport
<b>DEIS</b>	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
<b>DRHE</b>	Dublin Region Homeless Executive
<b>EaSI</b>	EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation
<b>ECCE</b>	Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme
<b>ECDW</b>	Education Community Development Workers
<b>EEAP</b>	Employment and Enterprise Action Plan
<b>ELC</b>	Early Learning and Childcare
<b>EPM</b>	Equal Participation Model
<b>ESF+</b>	European Social Fund
<b>ESRI</b>	Economic and Social Research Institute
<b>ETSS</b>	Educational Therapy Support Service
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EWO</b>	Education Welfare Officer
<b>FET</b>	Further Education and Training
<b>FOI</b>	Freedom of Information
<b>FRA</b>	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
<b>FRC</b>	Family Resource Centre
<b>GP</b>	General Practitioner
<b>GUI</b>	Growing Up in Ireland
<b>HAP</b>	Housing Assistance Payment
<b>HRB</b>	Health Research Board
<b>HSCL</b>	Home School Community Liaison
<b>HSE</b>	Health Service Executive
<b>IPAS</b>	International Protection Accommodation Services
<b>IQC</b>	Increase for a Qualified Child
<b>JLC</b>	Joint Labour Committee
<b>LCDC</b>	Local Community Development Committee
<b>LCYP</b>	Local Creative Youth Partnerships

<b>MESL</b>	Minimum Essential Standards of Living
<b>MMR</b>	Measles, Mumps and Rubella
<b>NCS</b>	National Childcare Scheme
<b>NCSE</b>	National Council for Special Education
<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan
<b>NEIC</b>	North-East Inner City
<b>NEIC MDT</b>	North-East Inner City Multi-Disciplinary Team
<b>NEPS</b>	National Educational Psychological Service
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NHAC</b>	National Homeless Action Committee
<b>NHVP</b>	National Home Visiting Programme
<b>NMW</b>	National Minimum Wage
<b>NOHP</b>	National Oral Health Policy
<b>NTRIS II</b>	National Traveller and Roma Integration Strategy 2024 – 2028
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>OT</b>	Occupational Therapist
<b>PDS</b>	Progressing Disability Services
<b>PHCP</b>	Paediatric Home Care Packages
<b>PQ</b>	Parliamentary Questions
<b>RAS</b>	Rental Accommodation Scheme
<b>RTR</b>	Right to Read
<b>SAC</b>	School Age Childcare
<b>SCP</b>	School Completion Programme
<b>SEAI</b>	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland
<b>SILC</b>	Survey on Income and Living Conditions
<b>SIM</b>	School Inclusion Model
<b>SIT</b>	Special Incentives for Travellers
<b>SLT</b>	Speech and Language Therapy
<b>STAR</b>	Supporting Traveller and Roma
<b>SUSI</b>	Student Universal Support Ireland
<b>SVP</b>	Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

<b>TY</b>	Transition Year
<b>WFP</b>	Working Family Payment
<b>WHS</b>	Warmer Homes Scheme
<b>WPEP</b>	Work Placement Experience Programme
<b>YEP</b>	Youth Encounter Project
<b>YI</b>	Young Ireland, the Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028
<b>YPSP</b>	Young Parents Support Programme

# 1

## Introduction



# 1 | Introduction

In 2023, the Child Poverty and Well-being Programme Office was established in the Department of the Taoiseach in order to deepen the cross-government focus on, and accelerate the response to, child poverty and child well-being.

The initial work plan of the Child Poverty and Well-being Programme Office, *From Poverty to Potential* (July 2023-December 2025), identified six priorities which have the potential to bring about significant change for families and children living in poverty. These priority focus areas are:

- Income Support and Joblessness
- Early Learning and Childcare
- Reducing the cost of education
- Family homelessness
- Consolidating and integrating family and parental support, health and well-being
- Enhancing participation in culture, arts and sport for children and young people affected by poverty.

The two main functions of the Programme Office are:

- 1** To monitor the delivery of policy commitments by departments and their agencies across the six key priority areas with a focus on some specific areas of action identified in the Programme Plan.
- 2** To undertake a small number of strategic initiatives which have the potential to increase the impact of current and emerging measures to fight child poverty and support child well-being.

The Programme Plan includes a commitment to producing an annual report documenting progress and highlighting key areas of priority for the coming years. This report responds to that commitment and aims to take stock of progress by capturing the multi-dimensional nature of the Government's response to child poverty and well-being. However, this report is intended to be more than an update; it aims to be a tool for learning for all of those who are working to make children's lives better.

Consequently, this report begins by providing an update on developments in each of the six priority areas. This update ends by drawing out some of the key challenges and lessons that colleagues across government have identified in delivering for children at risk of poverty. The report then goes on to consider the specific contribution of the Programme Office. It provides an update on work in relation to the strategic initiatives, describing how the Office has worked to date. The report ends by drawing conclusions about how the Office has provided enhanced focus on child poverty and draws out lessons for how the work of the Office needs to evolve and change in the coming period.

This report is part of a broader objective not only to sharpen the focus on child poverty but also to critically re-examine and re-think responses to it. It aims to contribute to cross-government learning in a way that addresses the complexities and interdependencies intrinsic to tackling child poverty.

## Methodological approach

Child poverty and well-being is an inherently multifaceted issue, and policy and services interact with child poverty in a multitude of ways. At its outset, the Programme Office identified over 50 government strategies relevant to its six initial focus areas. This landscape reflects the long-standing and wide-ranging commitment to responding to the challenges children and families can face.

Given the twin objectives of this report to capture updates as well as learning, the Programme Office developed a questionnaire for relevant department units. The questionnaire was targeted at individual units rather than one overall department in order to capture the heterogeneity of experiences of designing policy and services to respond to child poverty. The questionnaire, developed following consultations and workshops with key stakeholders and by considering learning from other cross-government reporting processes, was designed to capture updates, challenges and learning, and future orientations. Detailed feedback was received from 39 units across 13 departments. Separately, colleagues were also asked to anonymously complete a questionnaire on the impact and activity of the Programme Office itself.

The data for this report was collected during the summer of 2024; however, reference is made to later developments where these are important to understand the nature of progress. This is particularly the case in relation to key developments in Budget 2025. Consequently, this report extends beyond the first year of the Programme Plan.

## Governance of the Programme Office

The Programme Office reports to Government through the Cabinet Committee on Children and Education and Disability, which is supported by a Senior Officials Group.

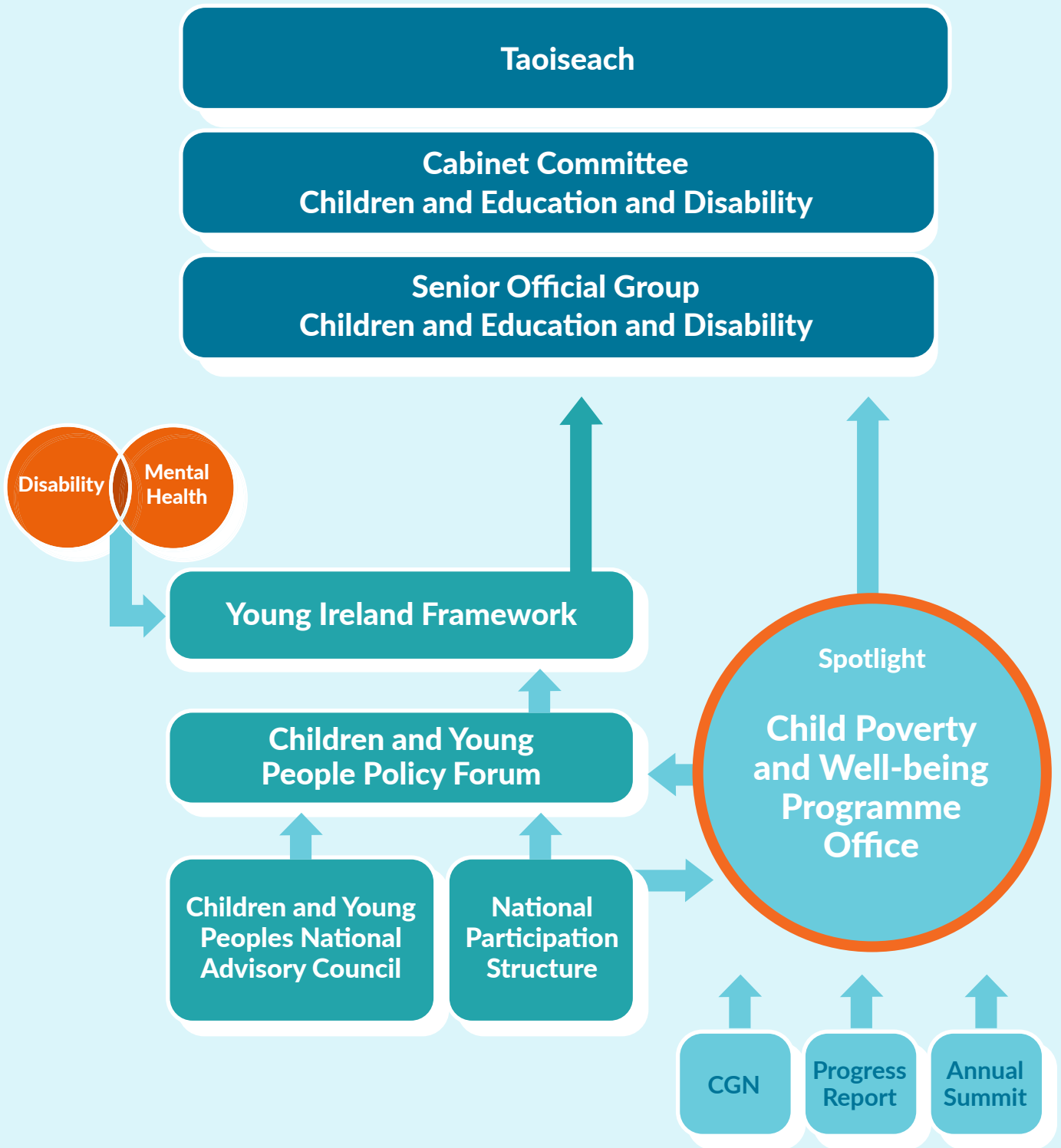
Ensuring the Office is informed by, and responsive to, children is of critical importance. The Office uses the established participation structures under the auspices of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (D/CEDIY) to support its accountability to children. Producing child friendly versions of all of the key documents is critical in supporting participation.

*Young Ireland, the Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028* (YI) is the overarching policy document which focuses on tackling the biggest challenges that affect children and young people aged 0-24. The Programme Office engages with the YI governance structure, in order to situate the response to child poverty within the State's wider ambition for children and young people. The Children and Young People's Advisory Council has been established to provide advice to the Children and Young People's Policy Forum and will enable the community and voluntary sector, as well as academics and other experts, to advise and support the implementation of YI. The Advisory Council will include representatives with expertise in the key issues facing children and young people, with an initial focus on the three YI Spotlight areas.

The three initial YI Spotlights are: child poverty and well-being; child and youth mental health and well-being; and disability services for children and young people. A Spotlight is a cross-government, time-bound focus on urgent, complex issues that can prevent children and young people from thriving. These Spotlight priorities have been identified because they are areas of considerable difficulty for some children and young people requiring more focused attention and support. Families experiencing poverty, poor mental health, or disability can find those challenges embedded over the long-term, and some families can find themselves experiencing all three. More specifically, through YI, the Programme Office will coordinate and cooperate with the other Spotlight initiatives in order to share learnings and consider areas of overlap and intersectionality.

D/CEDIY is also responsible for coordination of the European Child Guarantee. The European Child Guarantee seeks to prevent and combat social exclusion by guaranteeing access to a range of key services for children. The Guarantee also aims to promote equal opportunity for children at risk of poverty or social exclusion, and break cycles of intergenerational disadvantage. The Programme Office works closely with D/CEDIY to ensure integration and complementarity between the work of the Programme Office and the wider European ambitions in the Child Guarantee.

Figure 1.0: Overview of Programme Office and Young Ireland governance



# Overview of the Work of the Programme Office May 2023 - August 2024

## ENGAGEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS



14

Government Departments engaged on how to address child poverty in the Budget

4

International child and well-being offices met



262

participants at the Annual Summit



90+

NGOs engaged with (Summit & other meetings)



180

attendees at CGN meetings



7

Interdepartmental Groups



92

external events attended



## ENGAGEMENT WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

7

Youth Advisory Group meetings



2

children's art exhibitions

1

song developed by young people with Music Generation



## EVENTS ORGANISED

3

cross-government network meetings organised



1

Child Poverty Summit organised



1

British-Irish Council meeting



## COMMUNICATIONS

**19** Presentations given



**11**

Speeches drafted for the Taoiseach



## GOVERNANCE

**7** Cabinet Committees organised

**41**

PQs answered



**96**

Reps answered



**6** Senior Officials Groups

**3**

FoI requests answered



**9**

Briefings for Taoiseach



**50**

Government strategies monitored and consulted



## REPORTING AND MONITORING

**1**

Work plan developed



**2**

Budget reports written

**1**

Progress Report



**9**

Memos sent to Government



**1**

Summit Report



**1**

Participation Report



**3**

Reports of CGN published



# 2

## Cross-government update on six priority areas

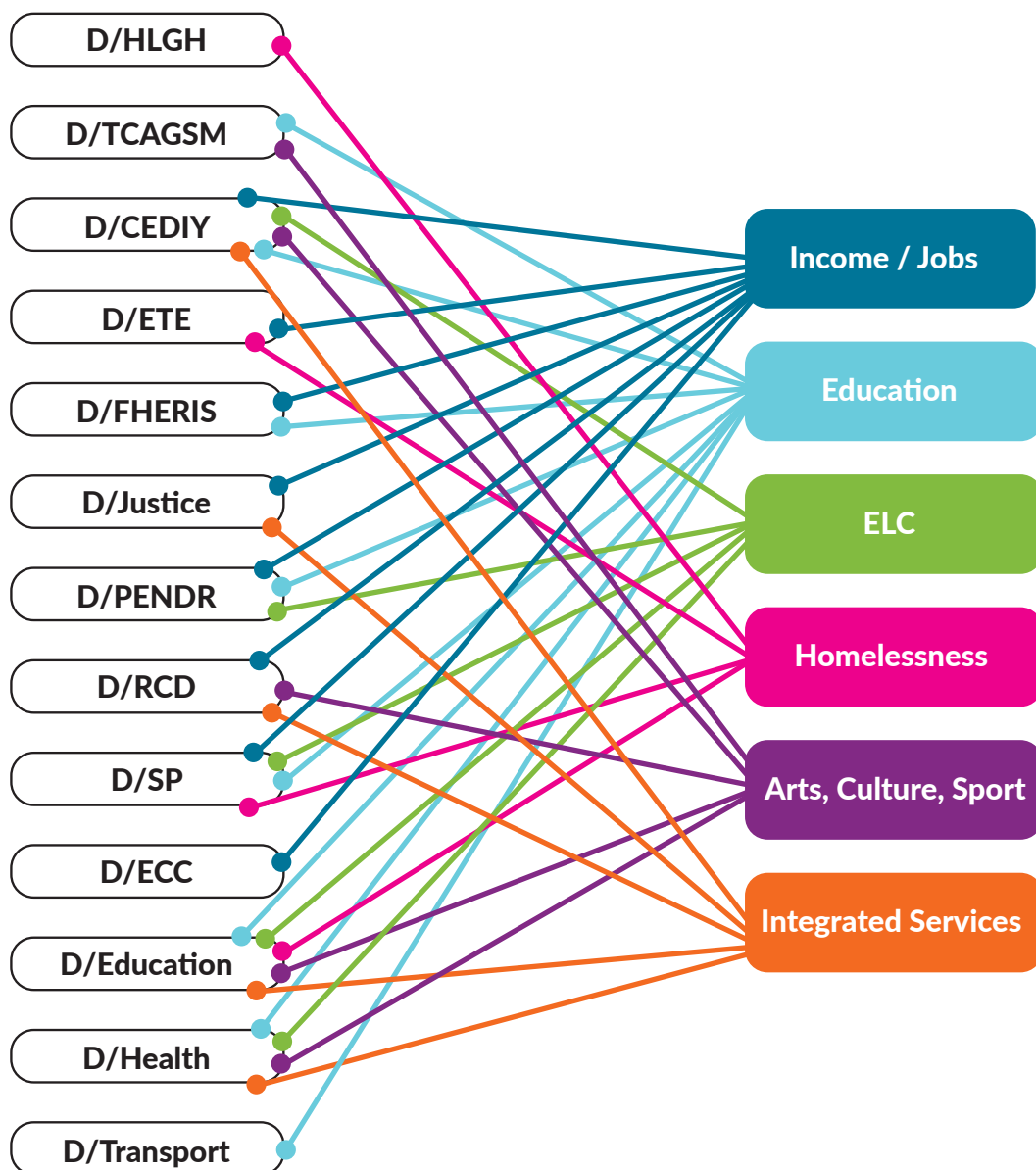


# 2 | Cross-government update on six priority areas

This part of the report is divided into the six priority areas identified in *From Poverty to Potential*. The six priorities were selected because of their potential to bring about significant change for families and children living in poverty. Each section begins by describing the context and the available data on the circumstances of children in relation to the key themes. The second part of each section summarises key relevant developments from August 2023 based on returns from relevant departments.

The purpose of this update is to capture and understand key developments over the first year of the Programme Office, and to take stock of progress in order to support learning and reflection in relation to possible future directions. As such, it is not intended to capture the full breadth of all relevant policy and services but rather to seek to reflect on what has changed and to be a resource in considering what needs to change, evolve and develop.

**Figure 2.0: Contribution of Government Departments to Progress Report**



## 2.1 Income support and joblessness

Child poverty is primarily experienced by families with insufficient income to meet their needs.<sup>1</sup> In 2023, approximately 175,000 children in Ireland (14.3%) lived in households that were at-risk-of-poverty (CSO, 2023). Throughout their lives, children who are economically vulnerable experience poorer outcomes in health, education, employment and well-being (Maître et al, 2021).

Individuals of all ages experience poverty, but children are particularly vulnerable. In 2023, 4.8% of children in Ireland lived in consistent poverty, a higher percentage than any other age group (CSO, 2023).<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, child poverty is not evenly distributed across the population but is strongly associated with certain family types. These include families headed by a lone parent; families headed by parents with low levels of education, not in employment, or with a disability; families who rent their home; and, Traveller and Roma families (CSO, 2023).

For example, while 21% of children in Ireland experience deprivation (i.e. their family cannot afford to purchase at least two items from a list of 11 necessities), this figure rises to 41% for children in lone parent families (CSO, 2023). In 2019, 28% of Traveller children experienced severe material deprivation, meaning their families could not purchase at least seven items from 11 necessities (FRA, 2020).

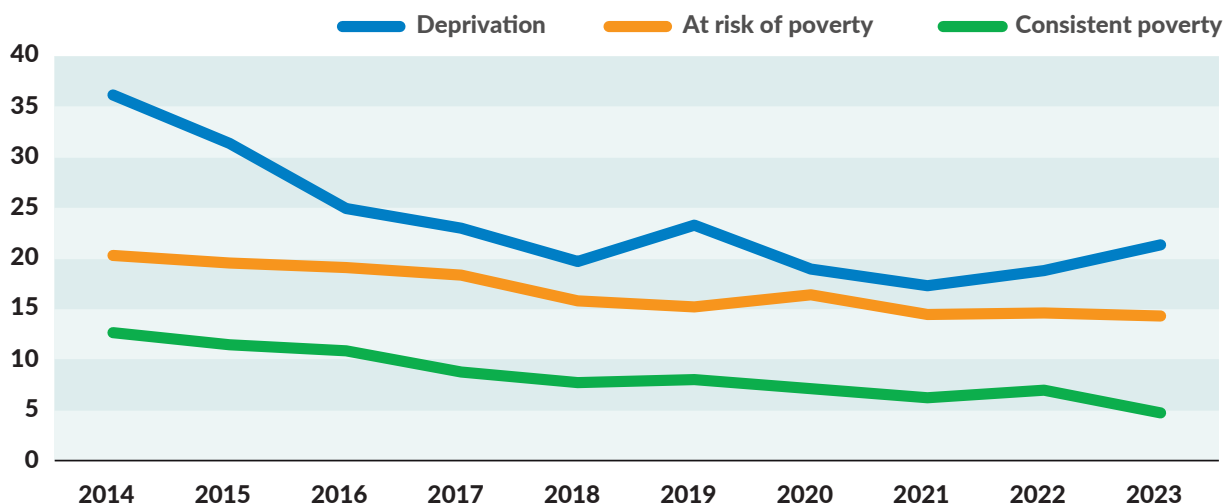
And in 2020, 34% of children with at least one parent with a disability were at risk of poverty or social exclusion (European Commission, 2023).

While poverty rates increased following the financial crisis in 2008, the last 10 years has seen a general downward trend. In 2014, the rate of consistent poverty for children was 12.7% and in 2023 it was 4.8%, the lowest in 20 years. However, deprivation has started to increase in recent years, and in 2023 was at 21% for under 18-year-olds (CSO, 2023).

Accessing employment is one of the best ways to increase household income. However, for some household types, doing so is particularly difficult. For example, just 32% of mothers with a low level of education are in employment (Eurostat, 2022).

While the CSO's Survey on Income and Living Conditions provides an annual and authoritative insight into the prevalence of poverty nationally, there are gaps in the data. Homeless children, children living in International Protection accommodation, and Traveller and Roma households, for example, are not included.

Figure 2.1 : Poverty rates for 0–17-year-olds. Source: SILC 2014-2023 (time series break in 2020)



1 A household or individual is defined as at risk of poverty if its income is less than 60% of the median disposable income.

2 Consistent poverty occurs where a household or individual has income less than 60% of median disposable income, and also enforced deprivation, meaning that they to go without at least 2 out of 11 basic items because they could not afford them. See SILC, CSO, 2023.

### 2.1.1 Progress Update

Under its initial Plan, the Programme Office monitors delivery of initiatives to financially support low-income families, and support parents to access family-friendly employment, including through employment and training interventions, as well as access to early learning and childcare. In addition to supporting delivery of existing strategies and initiatives, the Programme Office aims to work with the key relevant departments to bring additional strategic focus to developments in the following areas:

- 1 Ensuring that key income supports, such as the Increase for a Qualified Child (IQC) (now called the Child Support Payment) and the Working Family Payment, are not undermined by cost-of-living increases and continue to contribute to realising child poverty targets.
- 2 The income and employment situation of lone parents, who face ongoing challenges and for whom there are particularly high levels of poverty and deprivation.
- 3 Promote labour market inclusion for those families who are furthest from the labour market or where there are low levels of work intensity, including Traveller families and families headed by a person with a disability.
- 4 Families who need specific recognition in order to enable them to benefit from the range of available supports.
- 5 The development of an ambitious yet realistic new child poverty target.

Progress reports were received on this priority from eight Departments: Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth; Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment; Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science; Department of Rural and Community Development; Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications; Department of Justice; Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform; and Department of Social Protection.

During the reporting period, the impact of **permanent income support measures** for families with children was aided by the temporary cost-of-living measures also introduced in Budget 2024 and extended in Budget 2025, particularly for targeted supports. For Working Family Payment (WFP) recipients, the income threshold was increased by €54 in Budget 2024 and €60 in Budget 2025 with a once-off payment of €400 allocated in both Budget 2024 and 2025.

The Increase for a Qualified Child (IQC) (now called the Child Support Payment) was increased by €4 for all children in Budget 2024 and those under 12 years in Budget 2025, with an €8 increase for those aged 12 years and over in Budget 2025. The new Child Support Payment rates are €50 per week for under 12s and €62 per week for over 12s. In addition, a once-off payment of €100 for IQC recipients was allocated in both Budget 2024 and 2025. Other measures which benefit families with children, including those living at risk of poverty, include two double Child Benefit payments in both Budget 2024 and 2025 and a new baby grant of €280 from January 2025 onwards.

The **National Minimum Wage (NMW)** increased to €12.70 in January 2024, and this raised the NMW to 51.8% of the national median wage. Following Budget 2025, the NMW is set to further rise to €13.50 per hour from January 2025.

There have been some new developments to support particular groups of families who face challenges in accessing good quality jobs. Measures to support **lone parents** include the commencement of an engagement process with lone parents transitioning from the One Parent Family Payment to Jobseeker's Transition Payment and the 'Lone Parents Digital Activation' pilot project was completed in 2024. Wider roll-out of the pilot will be considered following an evaluation. The *National Traveller and Roma Integration Strategy 2024-2028* (NTRIS II) was published in July 2024 and focuses on a number of targeted labour participation measures.

**Labour market participation** for families who experience poverty and deprivation are also aided by other programmes. The Bursary Programme, under the *Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021-2025* funds up to 100 apprentices per annum for those who are experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. D/RCD's Community Services Programme (CSP) supported over 430 community-based organisations with a particular focus on the most disadvantaged communities. In 2024, preliminary data supplied to Pobal indicated CSP specific target groups, which include lone parents, Traveller and Roma, accounted for 83% of employees.

Key to underpinning the success of these measures is access to affordable, quality **early learning and childcare** facilitated by the *National Childcare Scheme* (NCS), which provides subsidies to meet the cost of early learning and childcare, and *Equal Start*, which aims to ensure children experiencing disadvantage can access and meaningfully participate in early learning and childcare. These measures are discussed in the Early Learning and Childcare section of this report.

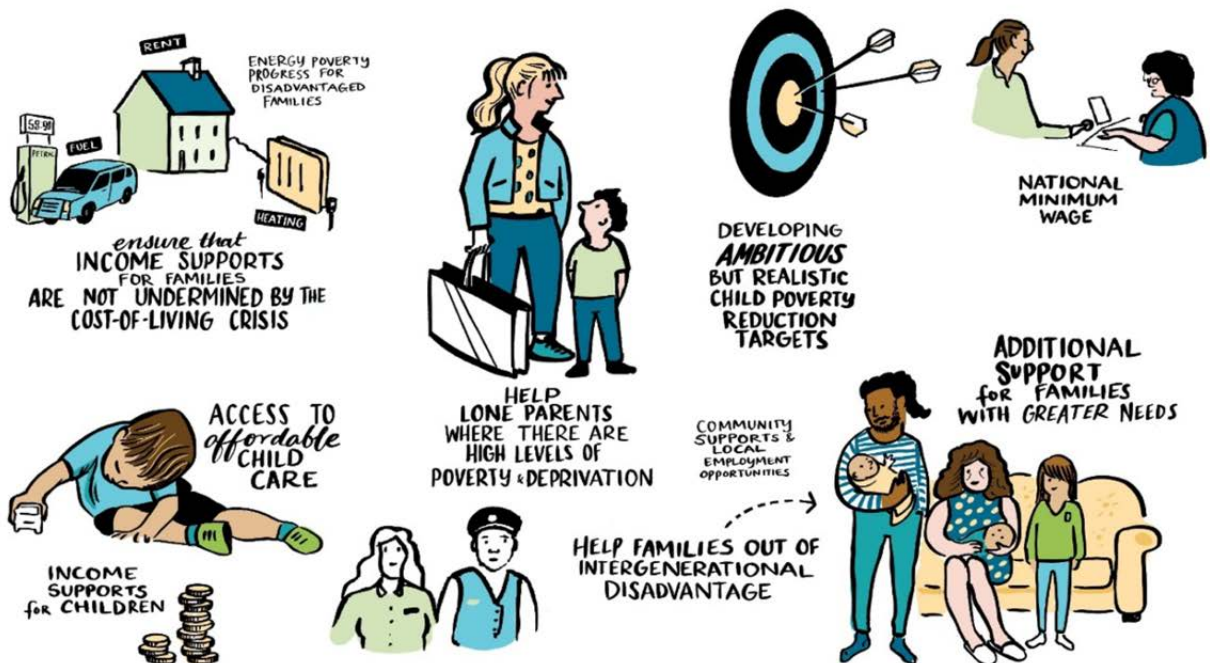
The *Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020–2025*, which encompasses a goal of reducing child poverty, is committed to setting a new national **child poverty target**. A public consultation took place between November 2023 and January 2024 and received 10 submissions.

While the main progress under this focus area is outlined above, **there are other measures of significance**. These include:

- Since June 2024, child maintenance payments are disregarded in the means test for social welfare payments. This will benefit 16,000 lone parents, with many on reduced rates of payment seeing their payment increase and others qualifying for a payment.
- *The Energy Poverty Action Plan 2022* set out a range of measures to ensure those least able to afford increased energy costs were supported and protected. *The Electricity Costs Emergency Benefit Scheme* was extended in Budget 2024 to provide support worth €450 to over 2.2million households. Budget 2025 has allocated support worth €250 per household in a further extension of the scheme.

- Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) supports are also available to households at risk of energy poverty. The *Warmer Homes Scheme (WHS)* a free energy upgrade scheme received a 2024 Budget allocation of €208.8 million. Budget 2025 has further increased the scheme's allocation to €240 million, its highest ever.
- The Low Pay Commission's *Report on Sub-Minimum Youth Rates (2024)* recommended the removal of all sub-minimum youth rates of the NMW. D/ETE have committed to commissioning an economic impact assessment of the recommendations and terms of reference are being considered.
- Payments to eligible Further Education and Training (FET) learners have increased in line with increases for general social welfare payments.

## INCOME ASSISTANCE AND JOBLESSNESS



## 2.2 The Cost of Education

There are significant costs associated with primary and secondary education, including schoolbooks, uniforms, lunches, transport, trips, sports and voluntary contributions. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) estimate that for a family with one child in primary school and another in secondary school, these costs come to around €31 per week (SVP, 2024). In 2023, school costs were reduced due to the introduction of free primary school books. With more than 563,000 children enrolled in approximately 3,230 primary schools, including over 130 special schools, benefitted from the free primary schoolbooks scheme. However, overall school costs increased in 2024 due to increases in the costs of stationery, school uniforms, school trips, school fees and the Voluntary Contribution. Costs are expected to have declined from September 2024 due to the introduction of free schoolbooks and classroom resources for Junior Cycle students from that month.

For families on low incomes, meeting these educational costs can be difficult. Eurostat estimated that in 2016<sup>3</sup> 32% of AROPE children in Ireland lived in a household that had 'great difficulties' paying for formal education. This compares to a European average of 17% and 7% of non-AROE children in Ireland. Consequently, children AROPE were six times more likely to be excluded from school activities that cost money such as schools trips (Eurostat, 2021).

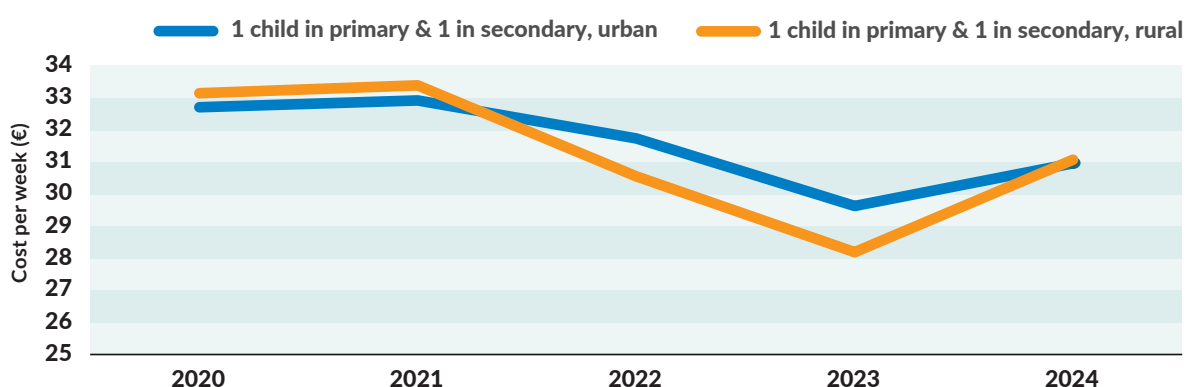
Educational outcomes for disadvantaged children are lower, with 15% scoring low achievement in reading, maths and science at age 15, compared to 3% for their peers from high socio-economic backgrounds (European Commission, 2023).

### 2.2.1 Progress Update

The CPWPO monitoring in this area concentrates on the implementation of the range of existing government commitments which are relevant to the cost of education for disadvantaged families and work towards reducing the cost of education for these families. The Programme Office identified the following focus areas:

- 1 Expanding the provision of free school meals, particularly for those children at greatest risk of food poverty.
- 2 Alleviating the costs of education for secondary school students, including the costs of specific resources such as schoolbooks, uniforms and equipment.
- 3 The costs of Transition Year (TY) for students from low-income households, as a barrier to realising the ambition of TY for all children.
- 4 Pressure on parents to make voluntary contributions and the consequences where parents or guardians are unable to make such contributions.
- 5 Continuing to close the education attainment gap between *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in School* (DEIS) and non-DEIS schools.
- 6 Ensuring that parents and children who live in poverty are supported in accessing further and higher education, including alternative education and training for those who have left school early.
- 7 Enhancing access to further and higher education for lone parents. For example, extending access to free fees and maintenance grants to part-time student will support those with caring responsibilities.

Figure 2.2: Costs of education for families. Source: MESL, 2020-2024



3 This data, published in 2021, is the most recent available.

Progress reports were received on this topic from eight Departments: Department of Education, Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media Department of Health, Department of Transport; and Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth; Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science; Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform; and Department of Social Protection.

Significant progress has been made in recent years regarding the reduction of the cost of education, particularly in the areas of school meals, schoolbooks and school transport. In Budget 2024, provision was made to extend free **school meals** to 900 non-DEIS primary schools (150,000 children) at an estimated cost of €87m in a full year. By September 2024, free school meals were provided to nearly 2,200 schools. This has recently been extended to all primary schools in Budget 2025. A **holiday hunger** package was also provided for in Budget 2025. Funding was allocated for meals in schools that offer a Summer Programme, so that children continue to receive a meal in the summer holidays, and a pilot scheme to provide meals next summer, in selected youth services every weekday for the 12-week school summer holidays will receive €0.5m funding.

Budget 2024 saw the expansion of the free **schoolbooks** scheme to Junior Cycle students from the start of the school year 2024/2025. This is a permanent measure and will ease some of the financial burden facing families with back-to-school costs. The Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme benefits more than 213,000 children and young people in approximately 670 post-primary schools. Government commitments in this area will be fully realised with the commitment in Budget 2025 to expand the scheme to Senior Cycle students ensuring every child and young person enrolled in post-primary schools in the Free Education Scheme have the resources required to access education.

The cost of education has been further reduced with the annual **school transport** ticket for post-primary pupils being lowered for 2023/2024, from an annual ticket charge of €350 per child, with a family cap of €650, to an annual ticket charge of €75 per pupil with a family cap of €125 per family. Funding was secured in Budget 2025 for the continuation of this fare reduction and the continuation of the Student Leap Card aids with the cost of school transport in urban areas.

There are also initiatives which seek to build on programmes which support families and schools to make sure that all children can participate in wider activities that enhance their school lives. The ASF Programme, co-funded by D/Education and D/Health delivers supports for **physical activity** in participating secondary schools free of charge to students, particular Transition Year students.

D/TCAGSM funds *DEIS Gaeltachta* scholarships for students attending second level DEIS schools who wish to attend **Gaeltacht** colleges. In September 2024, funding was increased from €400,000 to €900,000, allowing for just over 800 scholarships to support children to attend the Gaeltacht during the summer.

While these measures have made substantial inroads into reducing the cost of education, addressing the **attainment gap** between DEIS and non-DEIS schools remains a key focus of the Government's efforts to ensure educational equity. The DEIS programme has been expanded to encompass approximately 1,200 schools, supporting approximately 260,000 students, with €180 million allocated annually. An additional €20 million in DEIS grant funding was allocated to help meet educational targets for students most at risk of disadvantage and included an increase in enhanced supports such as provision of Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) coordinators and access to School Completion Programme (SCP) projects. The latest Retention Report published by the D/Education (2023) indicates progress is being made with the gap in retention rates between DEIS and non-DEIS schools narrowing to 8.4% for young people who sat the Leaving Certificate Examination in 2021 or 2022, compared to a gap of 9.3% three years earlier.

The DEIS scheme, however, does not reach all students who face educational disadvantage. The 2024 OECD report, *Review of Resourcing Schools to Address Educational Disadvantage in Ireland*, highlights that while progress has been made, ongoing evaluation and refinement of strategies are essential to further close the attainment gap and ensure that the additional resources provided are targeted in the most efficient way possible.

The *Traveller and Roma Education Strategy 2024-2030*, published in July 2024, facilitates targeted resourcing, with the strategy aiming to build on ongoing work across the continuum of education, to improve outcomes and ensure equity of access, opportunity and outcomes, as well as to support meaningful participation.

Reducing the cost of education as a way of lessening educational disadvantage extends beyond second level. Ensuring parents and children who live in poverty are supported in accessing **further and higher education**, including alternative education and training for those who have left school early is also important. Progress has been achieved recently with SUSI supports being made available to part-time students from September 2024 for the first time, enhancing access for lone parents and those with caring responsibilities.

The prioritisation of the reduction in the student contribution for higher education over the last two academic years has also aided progress. Other initiatives include the introduction of the Young Adult Leap Card and the increase by D/FHERIS in the Student Assistance Fund to over €19 million which has increased the number of bursaries available to students facing socio economic disadvantage.

## REDUCING THE COST OF EDUCATION



## 2.3 Early Learning and Childcare (ELC)

Participation in ELC benefits all children but has the greatest benefit for children living in poverty and is a critical intervention in breaking cycles of intergenerational exclusion and deprivation. ELC allows parents to participate in training and employment while promoting children's overall well-being and providing opportunities for play and interaction with peers.

In 2023, the proportion of children between ages 3 and compulsory school age in Ireland who were in formal childcare for between 1 and 24 hours per week, and who were at risk of poverty and social exclusion, was 65%, compared to 61% of those not AROPE. Administrative data reveals that 96% of children take part in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme, the free, universal two-year preschool programme available to all children for up to two years before starting primary school. ECCE is complemented by the National Childcare Scheme (NCS), combining universal and income-assessed subsidies to reduce ELC costs, and can result in access to free childcare for some families. In particular, the scheme includes arrangements for specified target groups to receive free access, where referred by a sponsor body on child welfare, protection, family support or other specified grounds.

The most recent comparative data (for 2022) shows that relative to other OECD countries, childcare in Ireland is expensive. In 2022, a typical Irish family spent around 18% of their income on childcare, compared to the OECD average of 9% (OECD, 2022). These costs are felt particularly by poorer families, who either spend a high percentage of their income on childcare or withdraw from the workforce to take on caring responsibilities (Paull, 2021).

Where parents withdraw from the workforce this can result in fluctuating and falling income and thereby increase children's risk of exposure to poverty. Data from the OECD shows however that net early learning and childcare costs for low-income single parent households have dropped from 19% to 9% since the introduction of the National Childcare Scheme. This data does not include enhancements to the scheme in 2024, which saw an increase in both the universal and minimum income subsidies as well as the rate paid for children accessing places through a sponsor referral.

### 2.3.1 Progress Update

The Government is taking a range of steps to ensure that high-quality early learning and childcare (ELC) is affordable and accessible to all children, especially children from vulnerable backgrounds.

The Child Poverty and Well-being Programme Office monitors progress on this ambitious programme for ELC and aims to work with the key relevant Departments to ensure that families and children who are living in poverty have the opportunity to realise the potential which ELC brings. The Programme Office identified the following focus areas:

- 1 Continuing state investment in Early Learning and Care, aimed at ensuring high quality and accessible ELC places to all children, but particularly very low cost or free childcare for the families with the lowest incomes and the expansion of the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM).
- 2 Promote the provision of ELC places where they are needed, particularly in areas of socio-economic deprivation, including through supporting the programme of capital investment in ELC buildings and monitoring progress on the development of a qualified workforce.
- 3 Development of the Equal Participation Model (EPM) (now Equal Start) which will ensure a specific focus on supporting vulnerable families and children to access and sustain their involvement in ELC.

Progress reports were received on this area from five Departments: Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth; Department of Health; Department of Education; Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform; and Department of Social Protection.

The *First 5 Implementation Plan 2023-2025* seeks to further improve the affordability, accessibility and quality of the **ELC system**. Measures progressed under Phase 2 include: further development of *Together for Better*, the new funding model for ELC and School Age Childcare (SAC), continued implementation of the National Action Plan for Childminding (2021-2028) and Nurturing Skills, the Workforce Plan for ELC and SAC 2022-2028.

Continued state investment is an important aspect of ensuring high-quality and accessible ELC places for all children, but particularly **very low cost or free childcare** for the families with the lowest incomes. In 2024, public funding exceeded €1.1 billion for early learning and childcare. The majority of this funding is allocated through **Together for Better** which brings together the ECCE programme, the NCS, the Access and Inclusion Model, Core Funding and the recently launched Equal Start. These schemes work to ensure children can access early learning and childcare at no or at significantly reduced out of pocket costs to parents. Since Autumn 2024, access to subsidies under the NCS has opened to parents who use registered childminders.

Core Funding is the Government grant to ELC providers towards their **operating costs**. In return for significant investment, services agree to scheme conditions including fee management and financial transparency. Currently a fee freeze is in place; however, a fee increase approval process was introduced in July 2024. A fee cap will apply to all Core Funding services from September 2024.

The phased extension of the Access and Inclusion Model was announced in Budget 2024. AIM offers a suite of supports – both universal and targeted - to ensure that **children with a disability** can access and meaningfully participate in the ECCE programme in mainstream settings. An additional €14m was allocated in Budget 2024 to support the increasing cohort of children with a disability requiring AIM supports, and from September 2024, for an expansion of targeted AIM supports outside of the time spent in the ECCE programme.

Equal Start the major new government funding model which aims to ensure **children experiencing disadvantage** can access and meaningfully participate in early learning and childcare commenced operation in September 2024, with a funding allocation of €4.5m (€13.5 m full year). Equal Start supports fall into three categories:

- Universal supports available to all partner services,
- Supports targeted at services with higher concentrations of disadvantage,
- Individual children and families experiencing disadvantage.

Children who will benefit from child-targeted support include children living in disadvantaged areas, Traveller children, Roma children, children availing of the NCS through a sponsor body, children experiencing homelessness and children in the International Protection system. Approximately 790 settings have been objectively identified as operating in the context of the highest levels of concentrated disadvantage. *Equal Start* measures include supporting the full rollout of the *Traveller Parenting Support Programme*, development of a new Family Community Liaison role and engagement by ELC and SAC practitioners with *Meitheal*.<sup>4</sup>

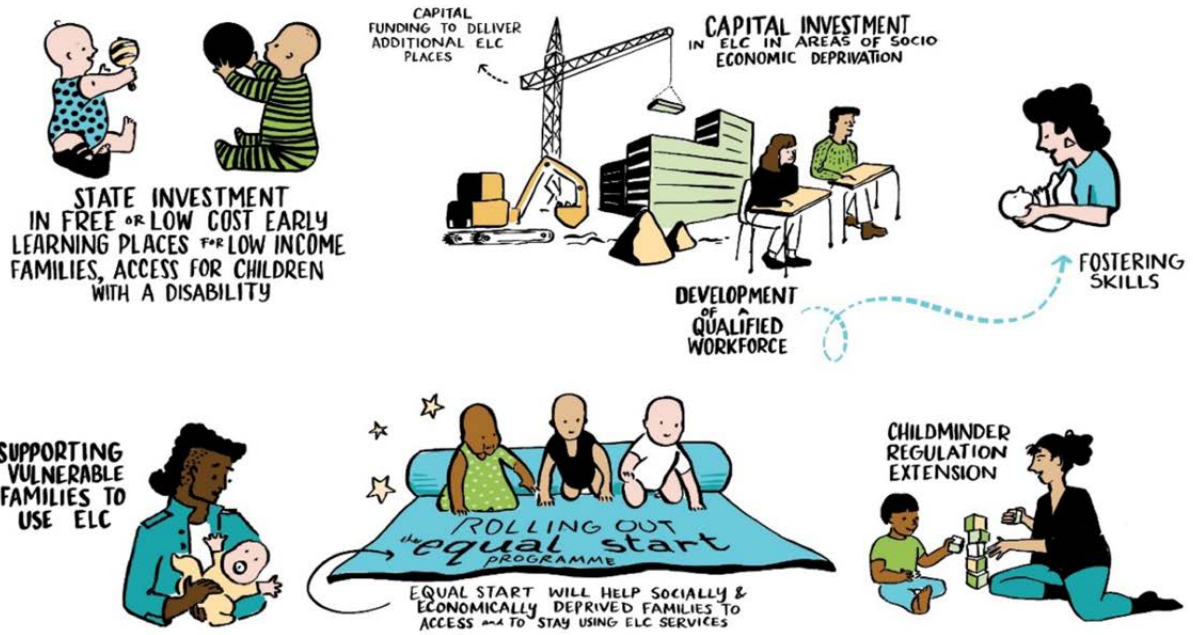
Provision of **ELC places** where they are needed is a vital part of ensuring access to quality and affordable early learning and childcare particularly in areas of socio-economic deprivation. The level of capacity has risen substantially year-on-year between 2022 and 2023. However, there is also evidence that demand for places is increasing and, for certain cohorts, outstripping supply. This is partly driven by the significant improvements in ELC affordability that have been achieved in recent years. In January 2024, a new Supply Management Unit was established in D/CEDIY.

Capital funding has been set aside for ELC **capital projects** over the period 2024 to 2026 under the revised *National Development Plan 2021-2030* (NDP). In July 2024, an Extension Scheme with €25 million in capital funding was announced. This scheme will also fund community-based not-for-profit services who wish to purchase or build new premises (189 community-based providers receive funding from the Community Service Programme, and in 2022 more than 13,000 children were offered places in CSP-supported settings). The application and assessment process will have regard to the *Equal Start* identification process.

In addition to providing ELC places, a priority for the Government is ensuring that services are provided by a **high-quality workforce**. Ongoing work under *Nurturing Skills: The Workforce Plan for ELC and SAC*, seeks to reduce staff turnover, attract graduates to enter and remain in the sector, and promote careers in ELC and SAC.

<sup>4</sup> Meitheal is a Tusla-led Early Intervention Practice Model designed to ensure that the strengths and needs of children and their families are effectively identified, understood and responded to in a timely way so that children and families get the help and support needed to improve children's outcomes and realise their rights. It is an early intervention, multi-agency (when necessary) response, tailored to the needs of the individual child or young person: [https://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/prevention-partnership-and-family-support/i-am-a-parent/meitheal\\_2/](https://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/prevention-partnership-and-family-support/i-am-a-parent/meitheal_2/)

# EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE



## 2.4 Family homelessness

In November 2024, 4,658 children in 2,168 families were living in emergency accommodation. (D/HLGH, 2024). This is the highest total since the D/HLGH began to publish national statistics in 2014. Child homelessness increased from approximately 800 in 2014 to its current high. Between 2020 and 2021 there was a fall. However, since 2021, the number of homeless children has continued to increase.

These figures do not include all children living in temporary accommodation. For example, in December 2024 there were 9,015 children in IPAS accommodation (D/CEDIY, 2024). In 2019, data reported to Tusla showed that 2,918 children were accommodated in domestic violence refuges, with an average stay of 34 days.

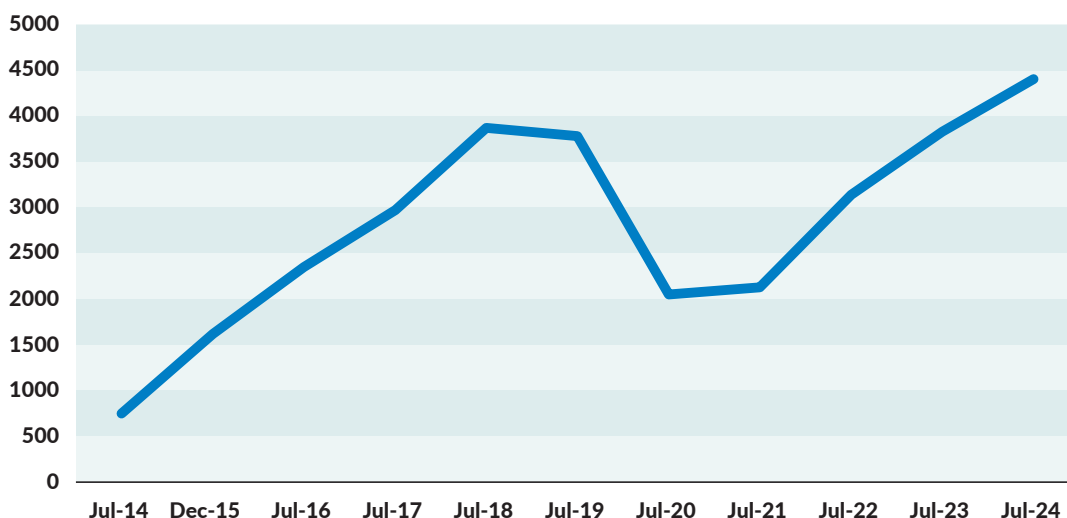
The consequences of even brief exposure to homelessness are serious. Children who experience homelessness are at risk of poorer outcomes including higher rates of emergency hospitalisation, obesity, respiratory illness and infectious diseases, and levels of anxiety. There is also a link with low birth weight, lower reading scores, and their parents report low self-esteem and poor nutrition (Laurence et al, 2023; McKenna and Scanlon, 2018).

While children are a minority within the total homelessness figures, they are more likely to be homeless than adults - children make up around 30% of the total homeless figure, but only 23% of the overall population (D/CEDIY, 2024).

A 2024 Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) report found that lone parents made up 61% of new families presenting to emergency accommodation services, while 19% of families in the 2020-23 period had non-EU citizenship, with this proportion increasing from 12% in 2020 to 26% at the end of 2023. 13% of families had 4 or more dependents, but almost 50% had just one dependent (Maphosa, 2024). According to data provided by the D/HLGH, the top three reasons for family homelessness continue to be Notice of Termination of tenancy in private rental property; relationship breakdown/family circumstance; and overcrowding.

Children from low-income households are more likely to experience inadequate housing conditions. For example, 18% of AROPE children in Ireland live in overcrowded accommodation, compared to 4.3% of non-AROE children (European Commission, 2023). Similarly, the relatively high costs of housing in Ireland are more likely to leave some families in poverty. Overall, 24% of children live in households at risk of poverty after rent and mortgage interest payments – the highest rate of any age group. Moreover, 45% of lone parent households, and 57% of families who rent privately with social housing support, are at risk of poverty after these housing costs (CSO, 2023).

**Figure 2.3: Number of children in emergency homeless accommodation 2014-2024,**  
**Source: Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage**



### 2.4.1 Progress Update

The Government recognises that helping families and children experiencing homelessness involves a multi-agency approach. *Housing for All* is committed to enhancing early intervention services for children and their families through a multiagency and coordinated response. The Programme Office supports implementation across all relevant policy commitments and seeks to enhance action that prevents and reduces the impact of childhood experience of homelessness. Working with relevant Departments, the Programme Office aims to provide enhanced focus on children and their needs in policy and service provision, and in particular focuses on:

- 1 Identifying the causes of family homelessness and implementing preventative strategies for those families at risk of homelessness.
- 2 The important role of wider family support services in helping those in homeless services as they transition to more stable housing arrangements.
- 3 The need to facilitate child and family responsive decision-making across homeless services, including to the extent possible in the allocation of temporary accommodation.
- 4 Promoting policy innovation aimed at generating creative and lasting solutions to family homelessness.
- 5 High rates of poverty and deprivation amongst families in receipt of housing support payments.

In relation to this focus area, progress reports were received from four departments: Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage; Department of Social Protection; Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment; and Department of Education.

In recent years, the D/HLGH has increased its focus on actions on family homelessness with the support of the National Homeless Action Committee (NHAC).<sup>5</sup> In 2023, work commenced on the development of a pilot scheme for homeless families with complex needs (see below) and in 2024, a new subgroup was established under NHAC to examine **barriers to exiting** homelessness for families in emergency accommodation.

During 2023, the D/HLGH continued to build the **evidence base** and transparency in relation to family homelessness so that service providers and policy makers can better understand the emerging trends.

While the number of families in homelessness has increased, there has been progress in relation to **preventing family homelessness**. In Q2 2024, 522 families nationwide were prevented from entering homelessness. There has been an enhanced focus on prevention and exit including:

- The extension of the *Tenant-in-Situ acquisition scheme* into 2024, which acquires properties for local authorities where a social housing tenant in receipt of Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) in the private rental market is issued with a Notice of Termination due to the landlord's intention to sell their property.
- *Cost-Rental Tenant-in-Situ and Targeted Leasing* and extension of eligibility for the *First Home Scheme* to tenants who have received a Notice of Termination.
- Local Authorities have put in place a number of HAP supports to prevent homelessness, including seeking to retain HAP properties, identify further units and providing tenancy sustainment officers. The *HAP Place Finder Service* has been established nationwide to assist households in, or at immediate risk of, homelessness by providing access to deposits and advance rental payments.
- The HAP discretion rate has been increased, since July 2022 from 20% to a maximum of 35% for all local authority areas. Additional flexibility has been introduced to allow local authorities to apply a couple rate to a single person household. The *Homeless HAP scheme*, operated by the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) for the Dublin local authorities, provides discretion to exceed the HAP rent limits by up to 50%.
- Lack of supply of properties for larger families, is a known challenge. Under *Housing for All*, Local Authorities are required to prepare a Housing Delivery Action Plan, setting out details of planned delivery of social and affordable housing, including for four-bed properties for larger families.
- The D/HLGH supports Local Authorities to have tenancy sustainment measures including tenancy sustainment officers in place to reduce the risk of households re-entering homelessness.

Where families cannot be prevented from entering homelessness, the focus of the State is to ensure that **emergency accommodation** is appropriate to their needs and that they remain in emergency accommodation for the minimal possible length of time. Increasing pressures on services and constraints on supply have made these objectives more difficult.

<sup>5</sup> The National Homeless Action Committee (NHAC) was established in Q4 2021 by D/HLGH to ensure that a renewed emphasis would be brought to collaborating across Government to implement actions in *Housing for All*, along with bringing better coherence and coordination of homeless-related services in delivering policy measures and actions to address homelessness.

Families are accommodated in either Family Hubs or in appropriate hotel or other commercial accommodation and are not accommodated in congregated settings. Family hubs provide more appropriate emergency accommodation for families and allow for more intensive supports to be provided where they are needed in areas such as welfare, health and housing services. There are 36 family hubs across the country.

**Family support** is a critical service for children and families who find themselves living in emergency accommodation. Family support is provided by a range of statutory and non-statutory services, including D/HLGH, D/CEDIY, Tusla, the HSE, and D/Education, as well as non-statutory providers.

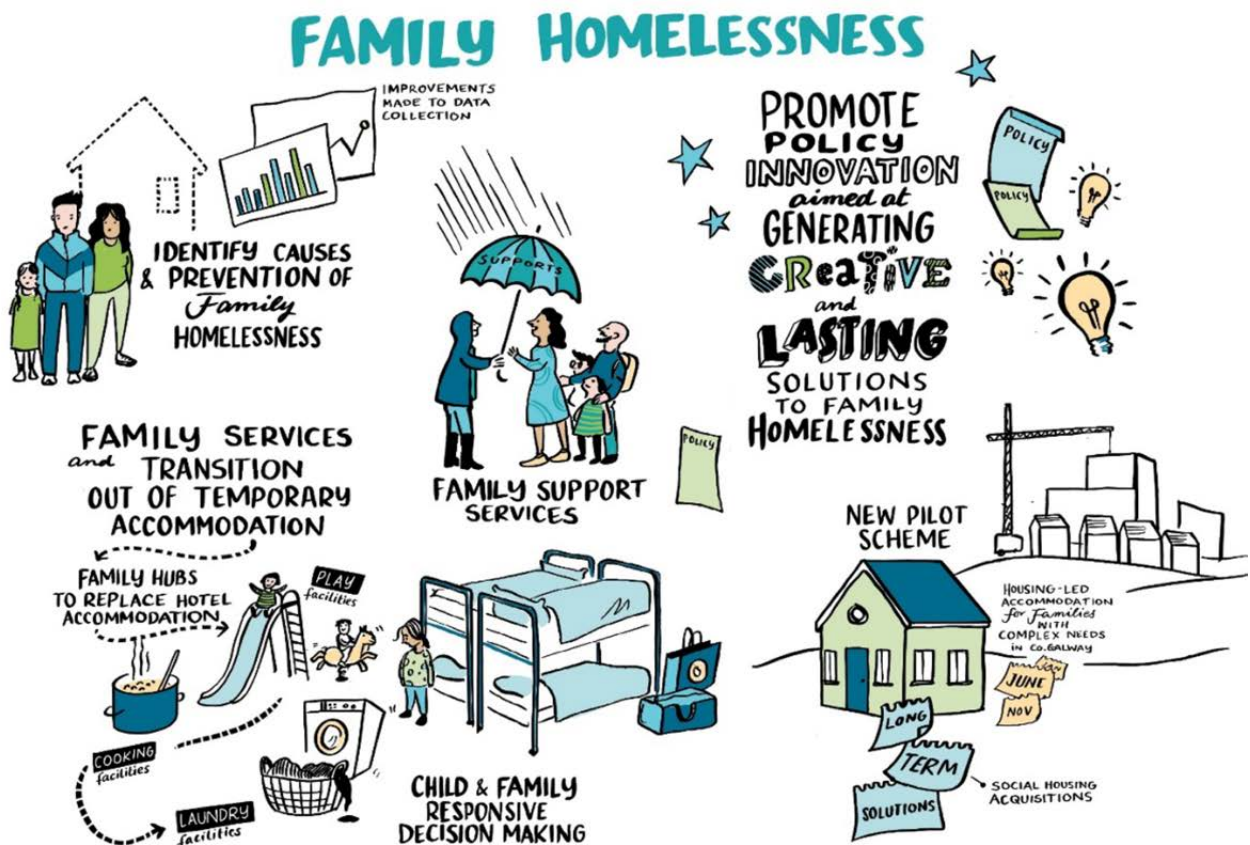
In 2023, D/HLGH commenced the development of a pilot scheme providing **housing-led supported accommodation** to four families with complex needs in Galway City and County. D/HLGH is working with HSE, Tusla, and Galway City and County Councils. The estimated overall cost of the service is significantly less than accommodating a family in emergency accommodation.

In terms of **wider statutory services**, D/Education provides a range of supports which aid children living in homelessness. For example, DEIS schools receive additional supports to meet identified needs of pupils and students, including additional needs that may arise for pupils experiencing homelessness. Children experiencing homelessness are also an identified priority group in targeted supports, such as as Equal Start.

High rates of poverty and deprivation amongst families in receipt of **housing support payments** is also a focus area under this priority. In an effort to make housing costs more affordable for local authority tenants, HAP, and Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) recipients, *Housing for All* commits to developing proposals to review the existing Differential Rent System and to provide for a standardised, national local authority social housing rent model. Further work has commenced to consider the practical application of such a scheme in the context of other reform package measures.

### Programme Office focus on family homelessness

Preventing and mitigating the impact of family homelessness is one of the six priorities of the Programme Office. To enhance focus on this, in summer 2024, the Programme Office organised two cross-government workshops, at senior level, to take stock of current initiatives aimed at ending family homelessness. The purpose of the workshops was to identify the challenges and opportunities in addressing family homelessness, and to explore responses to realise the ambition to end family homelessness. The Programme Office will continue to focus on enhancing the cross-government response to the needs of children who experience homelessness.



## 2.5 Participation in Arts, Culture and Sport

An area where poverty and disadvantage are most apparent to children themselves is in what activities they are able, or unable, to participate in. In art, culture and sport, inequalities of income and social class can become very clear to children when their peers have opportunities that they do not.

Moreover, participation in these activities is important because of their well-established benefits for cognitive development and higher academic achievement (Broh, 2002; Covay et al, 2010). For sports, in addition to the benefits to physical health, participation is associated with better outcomes in well-being and mental health and seems to narrow the mental health gender gap (Sport Ireland, 2020).

Ireland does have the second highest participation rate of children in regular physical activity in the OECD, including disadvantaged children (OECD, 2024). Nonetheless, a variety of indicators demonstrate that inequalities persist. For example:

- 15% of primary school children from a low socioeconomic background cannot swim, whilst just 3% from high socioeconomic background are non-swimmers (Sport Ireland, 2023).
- 80% of 13-year-olds from the highest income quintile take part in organised team sports at least once a week compared with 58% of the lowest income quintile (D/CEDIY, 2023).
- 15% of children under the age of 16 AROPE in Ireland suffer from enforced lack of access to regular leisure activities, compared to 2% of children not AROPE (Eurostat, 2021).

Inequalities also exist with respect to participation in arts and culture. For example,

- 35% of 17-year-old girls from professional/managerial backgrounds have taken part in structured cultural activities in the last year, compared to 17% of those from non-employed families (Smyth, 2020).
- 13-year-olds who have parents with higher levels of education are more likely to participate in arts and culture (D/CEDIY, 2023).

While these statistics give an insight into the general rates of children's participation by household income, and to some extent by social class and parental education, there is generally a lack of data that is disaggregated by groups that are particularly vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion, or indeed for more specific types of sporting and cultural activities.

Finally, the data says very little about the range of opportunities children are exposed to. While we know to some extent whether children participate in some kind of activity, we do not know the choices available to them. Intuitively, it seems a reasonable assumption that more affluent children are exposed to a greater range of opportunities in arts and sport.

### 2.5.1 Progress Update

The CPWPO monitoring in this area concentrates on the implementation of existing Government commitments and work towards increasing the exposure of children who are at risk of poverty to arts, culture, and sports through the promotion of specific measures which remove barriers such as cost, availability, and transport. The Programme Plan identified the following three focus areas.

- 1 Supporting a specific focus on arts and culture participation for children who have not previously been exposed to such opportunities.
- 2 The development of safe, creative and family orientated spaces and facilities for play and sport in areas which experience socio-economic deprivation.
- 3 The potential of youth work to engage with young people in deprived neighbourhoods as a means to encouraging engagement.

Progress reports were received on this topic from six departments: Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media; Department of Rural and Community Development; Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth; Department of Health; and Department of Education and Department of Transport.

Supporting a specific focus on **arts and culture participation** for children who have not previously been exposed to such opportunities necessitates measures to create opportunities. Foremost in creating opportunities for these children is the cross-government programme, Creative Ireland which includes the *Creative Youth Plan (CYP) 2023-2027*. D/Education delivers a number of in-school programmes as part of the *Creative Youth Plan*.

There is ongoing focus on ensuring that these programmes reach disadvantaged children and an approach to targeting is being developed. Creative Youth is taking steps to overcome this through targeted programmes and partnerships. Examples include:

- *Local Creative Youth Partnerships (LCYP)* based in Education and Training Boards, consult with young people in the community, coordinating local resources and networks to engage those at risk of disadvantage and marginalisation in creative activities. In 2023, a seventh LCYP was established.
- *The Creative Youth Nurture Fund Pilot 2023-2025* was rolled out in 2023 and supports nine projects to engage specific cohorts of seldom heard children and young people to participate in and develop creative projects. Projects include Creative Aftercare Communities, with Limerick Learning Hub working with young people transitioning from care or those in aftercare to identify their creative interests.
- *Creative Schools* provides funding and resources for schools to develop a creative school plan over two years. For the 2022 intake, four schools in non-mainstream settings attached to Special Care Units or Children Detention Centres joined the programmes. In 2023, five *Youth Encounter Project Schools (YEPs)* joined the *Creative Schools* programme. Given the particular needs of these settings and the young people within them, an enhanced package of supports was offered.
- *Creative Youth* has worked with the School of Education in Trinity to develop a *Creative Youth Evaluation Framework* and with the D/Education to develop a mapping tool which provides a visual overview of *Creative Youth* activity and best practice. Gathering data that can help to assess the provision of culture, creativity and the arts to seldom heard children and young people will aid this process and begin to close the data gap for this priority.
- In 2024, funding was also allocated to the *Creative Youth on a Shared Island* initiative for six new creative projects, engaging young people across the island of Ireland between 2024 and 2025.

**Youth work** plays a critical role with young people in deprived neighbourhoods as a means to encouraging engagement. Taking part in youth work has been shown to be a transformative experience, encouraging young people to take responsibility for themselves and to be part of shaping the world around them, while developing their talents, skills and abilities and supporting them to realise a potential within themselves, which may have otherwise gone unrealised.

In 2024, D/CEDIY published *Opportunities for Youth: National Strategy for Youth Work and Related Services 2024-2028*. The strategy sets out three overarching strategic objectives for youth services, including: that the role of youth work services to strengthen and better align with other services; an equality and rights-based approach is embedded in all services; and that all services are high quality, accountable, sustainable and shaped by evidence. In Budget 2025 €84.9m was allocated to current expenditure to youth services, an increase of 9% on the 2024 budget.

The role of youth work is also supported through wider funding across the State. For example, the Sport Ireland Dormant Account Fund supports the Youth Leadership Project to deliver youth leadership training for young people in socio-economic disadvantaged areas, and in 2024 also supported the *Her Moves* campaign, which builds on the *Girls Get Active* programme, which aims to give girls confidence and motivation, to help them feel empowered to be active and excited about trying new sports/activities.

Engagement with arts, culture and sports by children and young people who experience poverty is also increased by the development of safe, creative and family-orientated **spaces and facilities** for play and sport in areas which experience socio-economic deprivation. In 2024, D/RCD, as part of the *Libraries Capital Programme 2023-2027*, announced a major investment of €25 million in the public library service which includes the delivery of 11 new library buildings across the country. Some projects are located in areas which experience socio-economic deprivation and will offer modern family-oriented spaces to ensure that libraries continue to be the hub of the community, including through initiatives such as the *Right to Read Programme*. D/RCD has also committed to invest in libraries as community hubs across the country, with a particular focus on young children and their parents, in line with the implementation of *The Library is the Place: Information, Recreation, Inspiration - National Public Library Strategy 2023-2027*. Access to information, ideas, collections, and study and community space are provided free of charge in public libraries in disadvantaged and marginalised areas. CSP funding also supports community organisations to provide child and family-orientated facilities where young people can socialise with friends and take part in activities.

Other important initiatives which enhance exposure to participation in arts, culture and sport are:

- Funded by Sport Ireland from the *European Social Fund+ (ESF+)* since October 2023 the *Sport4Empowerment* programme aims to create more positive outcomes for disadvantaged communities across Ireland by increasing sports participation and physical activity levels.
- *Cycle Right*, the National Cycling Training Standard, operated by Cycling Ireland and funded by D/Transport, is targeted for delivery to over 40,000 primary school students in 2024, including 7,000 students in DEIS schools who receive a greater subvention than those taking part from other schools (€45 per student compared to €35 per student for non-DEIS students). To the end of June 2024, approximately 4,500 DEIS students received this training.
- The introduction of the Young Adult Card, the continuation of the Student Leap Card, the 20% fare reduction since 2022, and the decision in Budget 2025 to extend free public transport to children between 5 and 8 years of age, will reduce the cost of transport as a barrier to participation opportunities.

## ENHANCING PARTICIPATION IN CULTURE, ARTS & SPORT for CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE AFFECTED BY POVERTY



## 2.6 Consolidating and integrating public health, family and parental assistance, and well-being services

Well integrated services for children can help increase children's quality of life, provide better experience of services for their families, and reduce wider service use, for example health services where a child has a chronic disease (Satherley et al., 2021). Those who benefit most from integrated services include vulnerable children, particularly if they attend integrated services at an early age (Smith et al, 2004). The potential of integrated services, especially in the family and parenting space, contribute to a reduction of more acute or entrenched issues or problems downstream.

Sometimes services can be hard to find and difficult to navigate, even for families with good financial and social resources. For families living in poverty, who may be disadvantaged not only by income, but also by discrimination and lack of social integration, accessing the right services quickly can be particularly difficult. There is an imperative therefore for developing greater integration of services for children.

Integrating services means organising services in such a way that in the first instance they are accessible and, particularly where a child or parent requires the intervention of multiple agencies, those services collaborate effectively. In practice, this can involve enhancing the visibility of existing services, improving referral pathways, co-location, outreach for disadvantaged groups, collaborative delivery of key supports, and/or enhancing interagency cooperation in areas such as funding, data, administration, and governance.

Given the complexity of the service landscape and the diversity of needs of children and families, it is difficult to measure at national level the overall experience of service integration. However, the accessibility of services can, to an extent, be measured by reference to unmet need. For example, 5.4% of children in Ireland aged 0-15 have an unmet need for a medical or dental examination, higher than the European OECD average of 4.2% (OECD, 2024b). Data also points to higher unmet need among poor children who are not eligible for a full medical card, compared to children whose families have a higher rate of poverty and so are eligible for a full medical card (OECD, 2024b). Waiting times and waiting lists may also be relevant proxies. For example, 64% of children wait less than 9 months for an in-patient elective health procedure (HSE, 2024, p. 73) and 24% of open Tusla cases are awaiting the allocation of a social worker (Tusla, 2024, p. 13).

From consultations and informal feedback, more integrated services remains an ongoing and critical issue across the landscape of services which children access, but there are also a wide variety of good practice models which are in place locally, regionally and nationally.

### 2.6.1 Progress Update

Enhancing service integration is both one of the six key priority areas for monitoring across the system and one of the Programme Office's systemic strategic initiatives. The Programme Office aims to support service integration for children and families and to accelerate the emergence of a culture and practice of service integration. This work is informed by the progress updates and is elaborated more fully in the strategic initiatives section (3.2.2).

Service integration/coherence is an important and recurring theme across many government strategies, and yet there remains a view that weak service integration continues to undermine day-to-day experiences and outcomes for children and families. The Programme Office works to support relevant departments and agencies to close the gaps between the policy intent, local level innovation, and the reality that is often challenging for children and families to access the service they need.

In its Programme Plan, the Programme Office identified the following focus areas of work under this priority:

- 1 Supporting the development of four pilot child poverty local action plans, as envisaged under the *EU Child Guarantee Action Plan*.
- 2 Scaling and replicating existing examples of good practice, statutory and non-statutory, with reference to developing an overall coherent reference framework for service integration.
- 3 Supporting the development of the dedicated child health workforce, as envisaged under *First 5*, including promoting the value of home visiting.
- 4 Realising the ambition of *Supporting Parents: A National Model of Parenting Support Service* and enhancing the overall provision of statutory and non-statutory family support services.
- 5 Ensuring that cost is not a barrier to access to essential community services which act as a pathway to specialist supports, such as expansion to free access to GP care.

Progress reports were received on this area from five Departments: the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth; Department of Health; Department of Education; Department of Rural and Community Development; and Department of Justice.

D/CEDIY and D/RCD are jointly conducting the pilot programme establishing four **Local Area Child Poverty Action Plans** as envisaged under the *EU Child Guarantee Action Plan*. The pilots are being developed and implemented by Children and Young People Services Committees (CYPSCs)<sup>6</sup> in collaboration with their corresponding Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)<sup>7</sup>. The overall objective is to improve outcomes for children and families by enhancing service integration and supporting disadvantaged families to effectively access appropriate services in their local areas. The Local Area Child Poverty Action Plans will be based on a detailed understanding of the child poverty problem in each area and will also identify and define service gaps. €400,000 in funding will be provided from *What Works*, a D/CEDIY initiative, funded under *Dormant Accounts*, which aims to maximise the impact of prevention and early intervention to improve outcomes for children and young people living in Ireland. In September 2024, four Local Area Action Plans were selected and launched in Dun-Laoghaire-Rathdown and Wicklow, Monaghan, Tipperary, and Kildare.

*What Works* funding has supported piloting and scaling up **proven models** of service integration, which support more holistic ways of meeting children's needs, include the *Area Based Childhood programme*, the *Preparing for Life* home visiting programme, the *Early Talk Boost* language programme, the multi-disciplinary *Infant Mental Health Networks*, and the *Traveller Parenting Support Pilot*. The success of these models and pilots resulted in programmes receiving core funding so that they are now mainstreamed and scaled from 2024 onwards.

*City Connects* is an evidence-based system, originally developed by Boston College, delivered in partnership with schools and other services. *City Connects* organises student support and leverages existing school and community-based resources in order to improve students' academic and social-emotional outcomes. An independent rapid evaluation of *City Connects* is currently being finalised and will inform D/Education decisions on the expansion of this project.

There is a particular focus on service integration for children who have a **disability**. Under the HSE's *Roadmap for Service Improvement 2023 - 2026 for Disability Services for Children and Young People*, services are being reconfigured as part of the ongoing roll out of *Progressing Disability Services (PDS)* for children and young people, which covers universal, targeted and specialist services. A key aim of the PDS Roadmap is scaling and replicating existing examples of good practice across the Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNT), with a particular focus on service integration. In 2024, the Educational Therapy Support Service (ETSS) was funded by D/Education to provide therapy services in schools.

Another example of new or emerging practice of service integration is the *Supporting Traveller and Roma (STAR)* project, supported through the NTRIS II, which aims to help the children of Traveller and Roma families get the most out of schools. It involves schools, parents and Traveller/Roma organisations working together to achieve this aim.

Supporting the development of the planned **dedicated child health workforce** is also a vital element of providing services to children living in poverty. A Steering Group on the development of the dedicated child health workforce is underway. The group is exploring the range of existing relevant practice and models. Recommendations will be made to the Minister for Health and the Minister for Children. A project officer to support this work will be appointed in January 2025.

**Home visiting services** are providing valuable support to the child health work force. The recently published *Home Visiting: A national vision for the future* (D/CEDIY, 2024) and follow-up economic analysis (Doyle, 2024), outline the many benefits home visiting programmes bring to the lives of parents, babies and young children and estimate that further investment in evidenced-based home visiting programmes is likely to generate a positive return on investment for the Exchequer in the long run. Government has approved funding for the Tusla National Home Visiting Programme and has been established for a period of 5 years from 2024 which will seek to expand home visiting programmes on a national basis.

Access to **parenting and family support services** greatly benefits children and their families who are living in poverty and at risk of poverty. The Government's *Supporting Parents: A National Model of Parenting Support Services* aims to increase accessibility to, and awareness of, parenting and family support services.

<sup>6</sup> Children and Young People Services Committees (CYPSCs) are the key structures at county level for inter-agency coordination. Their overall purpose is to improve outcomes for children and young people through local and national interagency working and they work with the Local Community Development Committees (LCDC) to agree priorities for children and young people and support the delivery of services at local level. Strategic oversight of the CYPSCs rests with D/CEDIY and D/RCD has strategic responsibility for LCDCs which operate at local authority level.

<sup>7</sup> LCDC bring together local authority members and officials, State agencies and people working with local development, community development, and economic, cultural and environmental organisations, to implement a cross-sectoral approach to the planning and implementation of local and community development programmes and interventions. LCDC have primary responsibility for co-ordinating, planning and overseeing local and community development spend. They deliver on this primarily through implementation of the community elements of six-year Local Economic and Community Plans (LECP).

Ongoing implementation measures for 2023/24 include:

- Mapping of parenting support services by Tusla & D/CEDIY to enable better access for parents & practitioners to the most up-to-date services available in their areas.
- Expansion of The Interagency Young Parents Support Programme (YPSP, previously the Teen Parents Support Programme) to provide services to young parents up to and including 25 years of age. Four new YPSP sites will be established.
- Recruitment of 17 Family Support Practitioners, one in each Tusla area to provide a standardised pathway to coordinated child and family support services.
- Recruitment of 11 new Family Link Workers for the Tusla Traveller Support Programme, which offers culturally sensitive parenting programmes for Traveller parents.
- Set up of 'Parent Hubs' to support parents and caregivers in their parenting role. The Hubs work with Barnardos, Tusla, the HSE and community partners such as local Family Resource Centres (FRCs), CYPSCs, Youth Services, and LCDCs to ensure parents can access services in the community based on their needs.
- Promotion of available parenting support services in their areas by CYPSCs through the CYPSC Parenting Support Services Awareness Raising Fund. Each CYPSC will receive €5,000.

- Preparation for the recruitment of 30 Tusla dedicated parenting support advisors in all Tusla networks. ESF+ funding has been matched by Exchequer funding for 2025.
- Dormant Accounts funding of €1.5 million was secured in 2024 for Tusla for community and voluntary organisations which are existing service providers under Tusla's Family Support Services Counselling services for children and young people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

As announced in Budget 2025, the Sláintecare Healthy Communities Programme will be extended to an extra four disadvantaged areas, and will provide parenting and healthy eating advice, in addition to other health supports.

**General Practitioners (GPs)** provide a fundamental service in the community creating pathways and supporting disadvantaged children to gain access to the specialist support they need. The *GP Agreement 2023* extended GP visit card eligibility from all children under 6 years of age to all children under 8 years of age from August 2023. The Agreement also extended GP visit card eligibility to those who earn up to the median household income fully from November 2023. As of the 1 October 2024, approximately 83,500 more children (under 18 years of age) hold a GP visit card than as of the 1 August 2023. Approximately 94% of children under 8 years of age have free access to a GP as they now hold either a medical card or GP visit card. In 2024, Sláintecare provided funding to the Deep End GPs (a network of GP practices in disadvantaged areas) whose aim is to strengthen primary care and general practice teams in areas of deprivation.

## CONSOLIDATING and INTEGRATING PUBLIC HEALTH, FAMILY and PARENTAL ASSISTANCE and WELL-BEING SERVICE



## 2.7 Challenges and conclusions

The aim of this part of the report was to take stock of key developments relating to the six priority themes over the first year or so of implementation of the Programme Office's initial Work Programme. Each section began by capturing a summary of what we know about the situation of children who are experiencing poverty and deprivation, before going on to describe a cross-government analysis of key developments in the past year which seek to address the known challenges.

Income supports are amongst the most direct measures which can reduce child poverty. Ireland has a very effective social transfer system and continues to build on this by targeting families and children through targeted supports such as the ICQ/Child Support Payment and the WFP. Once-off cost of living supports effectively targeted children and have been shown to have reduced the number of children at risk of poverty during the cost-of-living crisis (UNICEF, 2023). However, income is one response amongst wider social infrastructure which is intended to prevent child poverty and mitigate again the impact of experiences of poverty on children's outcomes. Building on developments in relation to ELC, the Government launched Equal Start and expanded AIM, and enhanced the affordability of the NCS, to ensure that those children who are most at risk of exclusion have the opportunity to benefit from high-quality ELC provision. Education measures, including the expansion of school meals and free schoolbooks, have supported education inclusion and reduced costs for parents. The development of *Creative Youth 2023-2027*, built on existing initiatives and is enhancing opportunities for participation in key extracurricular activities for children and young people. There have also been several significant developments which aim to support families to access the services they need when they need them. This includes the expansion of the National Home Visiting Planning and the roll out of four pilot Local Area Child Poverty Action Plans.

When providing updates on key developments, departments were also asked for their views on the challenges they face in realising the goal to eliminate child poverty and support child wellbeing. There was significant consistency across responses, and six overarching challenges were identified.

### 2.7.1 Need to further enhance Family Support Services

Many respondents highlight the complexity of needs that face some families at risk of poverty and emphasised the significance of family support in developing a relational model of engagement that can support families to access the supports they need in a timely manner.

Navigating complex services and supports, can be more difficult where there are multi dimensional needs or intergenerational experience of poverty. Ongoing investment in family support services was named as an important mechanism for providing high-quality relationship-based support. Currently models of family support are often embedded in disadvantaged communities and are delivered through a mix of direct state support and funded state support, as well as more broadly by community and voluntary sector initiatives. Among the many models of family support, multi-disciplinary models such as Meitheal, CYPSC and CDNT have been found to be successful. Building on current investment and learning from successful approaches is important in ensuring that families access the supports and services that are available and is particularly important for vulnerable families such as those who are living in temporary emergency homeless accommodation.

### 2.7.2 Very targeted engagement with the most excluded groups

Several respondents emphasised the importance of being able to develop specific targeted responses to reach those who are 'furthest away' from existing services. Engagement and outreach programmes have been developed across a range of public services including education, health, youth, and employment. The importance of enhanced capacity to respond to the deepest needs by providing a 'very targeted' response was widely acknowledged.

### 2.7.3 Complexity

Respondents emphasised the ongoing challenge of responding to the complex and multidimensional nature of childhood and family poverty. While there have been significant developments in delivering more coordinated responses, responding to the multiplicity of needs continues to be difficult. The interdependence between income, social exclusion and housing continue to challenge service responses. While this reality is not a new one in terms of integration and governance, it remains an ongoing challenge in realising the potential of a cross-government ambition to addressing child poverty. Respondents named the need to enhance and deepen existing strategies, including 'no wrong door' approaches, better mapping of local resources and inter-agency relationship management.

## 2.7.4 Coordination

Complexity is also impacted by lack of coordination across services and departments. Respondents emphasised that while coordinating government policy has been a priority and focus of attention, it remains a challenging area that has yet to be adequately managed. Many respondents identified that a multi-faceted, cross-departmental approach is needed to address the problems they face in delivering their programmes. Greater capacity to enable mapping of local resources and an emphasis on relationship management at agency level will aid the development of a multi-faceted, cross-departmental approach.

## 2.7.5 Workforce

Many of the services and developments described in this report are experiencing recruitment challenges. While workforce challenges are more generally a feature of the growing economy and labour market, as well as social pressures such as housing costs, these challenges appear to be a particularly acute across a range of children's services, where there are problems in both the supply of qualified professionals (pipeline) as well as retention and development of staff.

There can be competing forces within public services, as well as with wider external constraints on the labour force. Training, developing and retaining qualified staff is key to building capacity and ensuring the supply of high-quality public services including in areas such as childcare, child health services, education, youth services and family support services, all of which are crucial components for further progress across the priority areas. The Programme Plan recognised this challenge, and workforce is an important strategic initiative under the Programme Plan for the coming period. (See section 3.2.4)

## 2.7.6 Funding and Resourcing

Several respondents raised the issue of resourcing and funding. In addition to securing adequate funding, respondents acknowledged the challenge of providing for multi-annual project planning in the context of annual budget allocations. Provision of long-term sustainable funding is essential for capacity building and longer-term coherent strategic planning for all the priorities but particularly for service integration and participation opportunities, as many of their services are funded on a short-term (or pilot) basis. Several respondents emphasised the importance of fully funding and scaling up successful pilot initiatives, as well as the need to 'mainstream' once-off cost-of-living spending. Respondents also acknowledged challenges in coordinating investment and resources, including the potential for shared or pooled budgets.

## Family Homelessness

The ongoing challenge of the rising number of children living in precarious housing and temporary emergency homeless accommodation was named by a range of respondents as an area of concern. As described in section 2.4, in November 2024 there were 4,658 children living in temporary homelessness accommodation. But this figure underestimates the wider population of children with an ongoing need for stable and suitable accommodation. Family homelessness is illustrative of all of the cross-government challenges highlighted in this section. The family support needs of these children are complex and multifaceted, and the service response is inconsistent. There are wider challenges in terms of the delivery of sufficient housing in both the social housing and private rental sectors. Demand for family hubs outstrips supply and there is a growing population of families who need not only enhanced delivery in terms of prevention, exit from homelessness, and tenancy sustainment supports, but also more effective services while they are homeless.

# 3

## Work of the Child Poverty and Well-being Programme Office



# 3 | Work of the Child Poverty and Well-being Programme Office

The overall ambition of the Programme Office is to bring greater coherence and integration to government action aimed at addressing child poverty. This section summarises the work of the Programme Office in its initial year or so of operation. In addition to monitoring progress across the six priority areas described in section 2, the Programme Office has sought to enhance cross-government action by building opportunities for reflection and engagement and by undertaking a number of specific strategic actions which were identified as important in enhancing the implementation of existing and emerging policy. Within its own work, the Programme Office has sought to embed learning processes so that it can be agile. The Office regularly seeks feedback from those it engages with, and this is summarised in the concluding section of this report.

In addition to delivering the Programme Plan, the Programme Office has provided secretariat support for the Cabinet Committee on Children and Education and Disability and its Senior Officials Group, and supports the broader work of the Taoiseach and the Government in delivering government priorities in relation to children and young people.

This part of the report outlines the Programme Office's activities across three key sections. The first section highlights the Office's role as a system convenor, fostering connections within government and broader society to engage stakeholders in the mission to end child poverty and promote child well-being. The second section reviews progress on the four strategic initiatives outlined in the initial Programme Plan. Finally, the report reflects on emerging lessons from the Office's work and considers priorities for the future.

## 3.1 Building connections

To support its work as a system convenor, the Programme Office established a Cross-Government Network on Child Poverty and Well-being. The purpose of the Cross-Government Network is to bring together the wide range of actors across government departments, their agencies and local authorities who are responsible for implementing actions and policies which impact on the objective to end child poverty and enhance child well-being. The Network creates a platform to support this diverse work and helps to foster a shared purpose and mission.

Three meetings of the Network took place in the first year of the Programme Office. The Network was launched by the Taoiseach at the first Cross-Government Network meeting in October 2023. The second meeting of the Network took place in December 2023 and focused on policy implementation. The third meeting of the Network took place in February 2024 and focused on service integration. The fourth meeting took place in October 2024 and focused on the child services workforce, and the most recent meeting took place in December 2024 and focused on the participation of children from low-income households in arts, culture and sport.

Reflections and learnings from the Cross-Government Network meetings inform the ongoing work of the Programme Office. More information on Network meetings, including meeting agendas and presentations, can be found on the Programme Office [website](#).

### 3.1.1 Child Poverty and Well-being Summit

Taoiseach Simon Harris, T.D., hosted the inaugural Child Poverty and Well-being Summit in Dublin Castle on 23 May 2024. The Taoiseach was joined by former UK Prime Minister and Chancellor, the Right Honourable Gordon Brown, and the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, who provided keynote addresses.

The Summit was attended by over 200 people, drawn from local and national government, state agencies, the community and voluntary sector, and academia. It was also live-streamed, with remote audiences given the opportunity to participate in proceedings.

The Summit had three objectives: to increase the focus on child poverty and well-being across government, take stock of progress and learning to date, and to inform the work of the Programme Office.

A panel discussion took place in the morning and 17 innovative Case Clinics were conducted in the afternoon. Each Case Clinic engaged the collective experience of the group to discuss a challenge or new idea that will help address child poverty or well-being. Case Clinic topics were wide ranging and included preventing family homelessness, maximising the impact of social welfare payments and improving educational outcomes for migrant children.

Children's engagement and participation was an important feature of the day. In advance of the Summit, a Youth Advisory Group on Child Poverty and Well-being was established. The Youth Advisory Group met regularly and worked with a videographer to prepare a video that was shown at the Summit to highlight the key issues that matter to them. The Youth Advisory Group also met with the Taoiseach and Secretaries General from the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. Children's participation in the Summit also included an art exhibition and a specially written musical performance by Music Generation.

A summary report on the Summit is available on the Programme Office [website](#).

## 3.2 Strategic initiatives

The initial 2.5-year work plan of the Programme Office identified four cross-government strategic initiatives which have the potential to increase the impact of current and emerging measures to fight child poverty and support child well-being. These initiatives are intended to promote cross-government action to unlock common challenges across the policy system.

### 3.2.1 Focus on child poverty in the annual Budget

Drawing on international experience, an objective of the Programme Office is to provide an increased focus on child poverty in the annual Budget process. In the leadup to Budgets 2024 and 2025, the Programme Office engaged with all government departments to address the Taoiseach's commitment to have a focus on child poverty and child well-being in the Budget. Following Budget 2024, the Programme Office produced the report, *Breaking the Cycle: New Measures in Budget 2024 to Reduce Child Poverty and Promote Well-being*. This described the new and additional spending in Budget 2024 to support children to realise their potential and escape inter-generational cycles of poverty. A similar report is being prepared for Budget 2025.

Looking forward, the Programme Office will seek to build on the work it has carried out to date with departments on how the Budget can address child poverty and address some of the challenges which arise in this work. For example, it can be challenging to determine which universal (or associated) measures should be included because they have a direct impact on children living at risk of poverty and which measures should not be included, even though they may support children more generally. The Office will also continue to work with partners to support impact analysis of budget measures.

### 3.2.2 Change programme to support service integration for children and families

Challenges of coherence and coordination in service provision remain a significant issue for service providers, policymakers, children, families and communities. While enhancing service integration is one of the six priority areas of the Programme Plan, the Office also aims to accelerate the emergence of a culture and practice of service integration in order to promote better outcomes for children in need.

The primary focus in its first year has been to build up awareness of existing service integration practices and initiatives. The Programme Office has worked to build understanding and begin to develop a cross-government perspective of the challenges of systematising and replicating such practice. Activities of the Programme Office have included:

- A focus on the practice and challenges of service integration at the third meeting of the Cross Government Network on Child Poverty and Well-Being in February 2024.
- Working with D/CEDIY to help develop a pilot programme of Local Area Child Poverty Action Plans, connected to the EU Child Guarantee. The objective of these pilot plans is to achieve better service integration and improve access to available services for disadvantaged children, young people and their families.
- Engaging with stakeholders to explore innovative practice on integrated services.
- Collaborating with D/CEDIY and D/Education to commission research on school-linked models of service integration.
- Working with the CSO to support the use of existing administrative data to deliver insights, evidence and evaluation.

In its first year, the Programme Office has focused on highlighting existing service integration initiatives and identifying key lessons from their implementation. This will feed into the development of a framework outlining key elements of service integration which will be published in 2025.

## Programme Board on Building Stronger and More Integrated Responses to Local Area Challenges

Many of the initiatives described in this report recognise that poverty and its impacts are associated with and exacerbated where children and families live in areas of concentrated disadvantage. While the initiatives described in this report focus specifically on children, there are a wide range of government programmes aimed at transforming local areas. Recognising the need to enhance coordination across these responses the D/Taoiseach established a Programme Board in 2022.

The Programme Board on Building Stronger and More Integrated Responses to Local Area Challenges is made up of relevant departments and public bodies and was established under the auspices of the D/Taoiseach. The Programme Board aims to create a cross-government focal point for area-based initiatives on disadvantage, in order to encourage alignment between them through a consortia approach, and to ensure sustained engagement with local communities around their needs.

During the period 2023-2024, the Programme Board has contributed to progressing policy in several ways, including through:

- Monitoring of progress of consortia-like structures in nine local areas facing specific challenges of disadvantage;
- Supporting the establishment of the Ballymun Implementation Board in 2024;
- Supporting the national rollout of the Local Community Safety Partnerships;
- Working with the CSO to maximise the use of small area administrative data through the development of a prototype local area data hub of relevant administrative data;
- Establishing a data subgroup of officials at national and local level which is working to increase data sharing, collection and analytics capacity as well as identify synergies with related data projects;
- Establishing a network of senior civil servants at national level which is working to achieve greater coherence, alignment and efficiencies across the range of partnerships operating at local area level; and
- Gaining a comprehensive understanding of how government funds programmes, particularly with regard to the geographical spread of programmes.

### 3.2.3 Cross-government tools to enhance policy and implementation focus on child poverty

In Ireland and internationally, there are a range of specific policy implementation tools which aim to enhance responses to child poverty and well-being. These tools include regulatory and other impact assessments, targets to reduce child poverty, child and equality budgeting, and legislative and other policy development instruments. The Programme Office aims to promote the use of existing tools, to strengthen and deepen their utility across the policy-making system, and to explore how such tools can be enhanced.

In the first year of the Programme Plan, the Programme Office has reviewed international literature on tools that enhance the policy focus on children and child poverty. In addition, the Office has engaged with a number of departments on work in this area. This includes:

- Engagement with the Department of Social Protection on the development of a child poverty target.
- Engagement with the Equality Budgeting division in D/PENDR, and input into the development of the Public Service Performance Report.
- Engagement with D/CEDIY on their work to identify expenditure on children in government spending and their work on children's rights impact assessments.
- Engagement with the development of the Civil Service Management Board (CSMB) handbook which aims to promote coherence and consistency across the civil service concerning the process of policy development.

While the Office has and will continue to focus on specific tools, this work is informed by emergent thinking on bringing about change in complex systems. In particular, this approach draws on work on [Human Learning Systems](#), developed by the Centre of Public Impact, which provides guidance on embedding learning in the work of the Office, as well as in monitoring and governance activity.

### 3.2.4 Initiative on child services workforce development

Recruitment and retention challenges in the child services workforce are common across a broad range of service delivery areas in the statutory and non-statutory sectors. The Office is exploring how best to bring a strategic and cross-government lens to these questions, in the context of wider public sector workforce challenges. Relevant work includes:

- Engagement with D/FHERIS and other departments to explore cross-government issues in relation to child services workforces.
- Membership of the D/Health working group to realise the commitment in *First 5* to develop a dedicated child health workforce.
- Looking at approaches to address recruitment and retention challenges in the children's services workforce as the theme of the fourth meeting of the Cross Government Network on Child Poverty and Well-being (October 2024).
- Engagement with D/CEDIY to plan *Young Ireland* action to support cross-government efforts to promote public service work with children and young people.

There are several significant existing initiatives to address workforce challenges, including sophisticated demand modelling and initiatives to enhance training and learning and to think innovatively about labour force supply. Preliminary assessment suggests that these initiatives might be strengthened by an enhanced cross-government supporting infrastructure, however the challenges facing children's services raises questions relevant to broader public services. Moving forward, the Programme Office will continue to work on how best to ensure coherent and strategic planning across the children's services workforce.

### 3.3 Evaluation and impact assessment

The establishment of the Programme Office is intended to enhance focus and delivery on child poverty. It represents an opportunity to promote a centralised response to this complex and intractable social problem. That is why it is important to reflect on how the Office is adding value to the wider government response to child poverty and well-being.

In its first year, the Programme Office has worked with key stakeholders to develop a set of indicators that can support understanding of the impacts of child poverty. Each of the thematic updates in section 2 have included available data on how the focus in each area is impacting children's lives today. However, there are potentially wider sources of available data, particularly administrative data, and gaps remain.

This section begins by describing work to enhance access to data that can support the delivery of the six priority areas and then concludes with a short section which captures key learning for the Programme Office from its first year.

#### 3.3.1 Data and indicators to understand child poverty and child well-being

In its Programme Plan, the Office anticipated developing a tailored set of indicators which would track overall progress in relation to the six priority issues. It was intended that this would draw on existing available data and identify any potential data gaps.

But because the CSO is developing a data hub on children, it was decided that this would be an appropriate mechanism to capture available data of relevance to the six priority areas in the Programme Plan. This hub will focus on children and young people, providing regularly updated data from multiple data sources. The CSO's children hub is due to be launched in Spring 2025.

The Programme Office has also engaged in other initiatives which are aimed at enhancing understanding of children's lives and child poverty. These initiatives include:

- Engagement with D/CEDIY on the module on measurement in their OECD report, *Together for Children and Young People in Ireland: Towards a New Governance Framework*.
- Working with the CSO to support and strengthen use of administrative data to better understand the situation of communities at local level.
- Engagement with D/CEDIY in their review of the Children and Young People's, and State of the Nation's Children, indicator sets.
- Engagement with Pobal on their research to develop a child-centred poverty measurement.

There are established and effective measures for income poverty and deprivation, albeit with time lags; however, this data does not provide an overall measure of children's outcomes. Adopting a more comprehensive data response will facilitate a clearer overall picture. In the coming period, the Office will continue to work with all relevant stakeholders to embed more comprehensive understandings of the well-being of children who are living at risk of poverty.

#### 3.3.2 Review of the Programme Office

As the Programme Office aims to enhance focus on child poverty, it has developed an evaluation framework to monitor cross-government action in the priority areas under its Programme Plan. Section 2 has provided an overview of the key developments over the last year. However, a central question for the Programme Office itself is the extent to which it has contributed to the enhancement of these responses.

In reflecting and taking stock of its first year, the Programme Office asked colleagues across government for feedback on how the Office has performed and specifically how it has supported their work and enhanced cross-government action. A short anonymous survey was distributed to all government Departments and 19 responses were received.

#### Survey responses on impact of Programme Office in its first year

- Nearly 60% of departmental respondents agreed that in its first year the Programme Office "has led to greater cross-government collaboration and policy cohesion"; however, 40% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 36% agreed that the Programme Office "has changed how my department approaches child poverty and well-being", 57% neither agreed nor disagreed and one respondent disagreed.
- 42% agreed that the Programme Office and its Plan "has helped to progress my organisations work in the context of the six priorities".

Respondents were asked how the Programme Office has impacted their work and to provide examples of specific progress, as well as examples of enhanced collaboration and greater policy cohesion. They were also asked for their ideas about what the Programme Office should do differently. Several key learnings can be distilled from this feedback.

- (1) The Programme Office has enabled departments to deepen and enhance the focus on children who are at risk of poverty in some existing programmes. The examples provided suggest that the Programme Plan led to expansion of delivery in known areas of disadvantage, and that departments have been able to use the Programme Plan to “embed the focus on provision for seldom heard children”.
- (2) The existence of the Programme Office raises the profile of existing targeted initiatives and programmes aimed at addressing child poverty. By focusing attention on these topics, the Programme Plan has enabled certain areas of work to receive increased attention and profile and has supported the case for ongoing and enhanced investment. One respondent said: “without the existence of the Programme Office, my unit’s work would have a much lower profile”. For one respondent, the symbolic role of the Office is important, in that its existence “indicates that the well-being of children is a key priority for the Government”.
- (3) The convening and expertise role of the Programme Office has supported the development and delivery of new initiatives. Some new actions have emerged or will emerge as a consequence of the interventions of the Programme Office.
- (4) The work of the Programme Office has enhanced cross-government awareness and connections, allowing government stakeholders to build collaborations and synergies (and avoid duplication). While some concrete initiatives were named, many reflected the importance of networking and information sharing generally and suggested that while still at “a relatively early stage”, this enhanced connectivity is likely to lead to a further deepening of collaboration. One respondent said that the Programme Office “enables connections, information sharing and highlights the current landscape and challenges”. For another, the Office has an important role to play in communicating evidence about interventions that work and to “highlight the policies that are making a real difference”.
- (5) There is an important role for the Programme Office in articulating the multi-dimensional nature of work to address child poverty. For example, through its Budget report, the Office helps to provide visibility to the whole-of-government response to child poverty. Respondents also raised the importance of identifying gaps and challenges in the cross-government response. While assembling the ‘jigsaw pieces’ is important, a small number of respondents encouraged the Programme Office to think about how information requests and reporting can be streamlined and to be cognisant of ‘reporting fatigue’ more generally across the government system.
- (6) The Programme Office has had wide engagement across many departments, but the Office has not yet reached out to all relevant programmes and policy areas. While some reported substantial engagement with the Office, it is also clear that a number of respondents had not yet had the opportunity to engage with the Programme Office or had not yet used the Programme Plan to enhance their own work in any specific way. One respondent suggested that the Office should deepen its “engagement with Units within Departments”.

The Programme Office is grateful to colleagues for this feedback, which builds on ongoing feedback and evaluation of individual events and meetings. Looking to the future, the Programme Office will evolve how it works to ensure that it continues to learn about how it can best support growing and focused attention on child poverty.

# 4 | Conclusions

When launching the Cross-Government Network on child poverty and well-being, the Taoiseach emphasized that child poverty is not an inevitability, noting that addressing it “will take a sustained effort, and no one part of government can do it alone”. This report highlights both the complexity of child poverty, and the multifaceted response required to tackle its impact on children and families.

The purpose of this report is twofold: to provide an update on the multi dimensional government response to child poverty and well-being, and to serve as a tool for reflection and learning for those working to improve children’s lives.

The report is structured in two main parts. The first section offers updates from government departments on progress within six priority areas, identifying key challenges and lessons learned in delivering for children at risk of poverty. The second section focuses on the work of the Programme Office, summarising its activities and incorporating feedback received on its efforts to date.

This report reflects a broader ambition to not only sharpen the focus on child poverty but also critically evaluate and reimagine the strategies used to address it. It seeks to foster cross-government learning while addressing the inherent complexities and interdependencies involved in tackling child poverty.

The new Programme for Government strengthens this commitment with plans to set an ambitious child poverty target, progressively increase the Child Support Payment, and reduce childcare costs. It also builds on current initiatives, including the further rollout of *Equal Start*, the introduction of a new *DEIS Plus Scheme*, and the expansion of Family Resource Centres. Additionally, it aims to enhance the central referral mechanism for community paediatric services, including CAMHS.

Looking ahead to 2025, the Programme Office will review progress, address challenges, and continue monitoring how the cross-government response is improving the lives of children, families, and communities. Together, these efforts reflect a collective resolve to ensure every child has the opportunity to thrive.

# Government Strategies Monitored and Consulted

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, <a href="#">Action Plan for Disability Services 2024-2026</a>
Department of Children and Youth Affairs, <a href="#">First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028</a>
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, <a href="#">EU Child Guarantee: Ireland's National Action Plan</a>
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, <a href="#">National Action Plan Against Racism</a>
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, <a href="#">Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making Action Plan 2024-2028</a>
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, <a href="#">National Action Plan for Childminding 2021-2028</a>
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, <a href="#">Opportunities for Youth: National Strategy for Youth Work and Related Services 2024-2028</a>
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, <a href="#">National Traveller and Roma Integration Strategy 2024-2028 (NTRIS II)</a>
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, <a href="#">Nurturing Skills: The Workforce Plan for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare 2022-2028</a>
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, <a href="#">Supporting Parents: A National Model of Parenting Support Services</a>
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Department of Education and Skills, <a href="#">Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025</a>
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Department of Education, <a href="#">Traveller and Roma Education Strategy 2024-2030</a>
Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, <a href="#">Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025</a>
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Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science; Higher Education Authority, <a href="#">National Access Plan: A Strategic Action Plan for Equity of Access, Participation and Success in Higher Education 2022 to 2028</a>
Department of Health, <a href="#">Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021-2025</a>
Department of Health, <a href="#">Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery: A health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025</a>

Department of Health, <a href="#">Sharing the Vision-A Mental Health Policy For Everyone 2020-2030</a>
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, <a href="#">Housing for All: A New Housing Plan for Ireland</a>
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, <a href="#">Youth Homelessness Strategy 2023-2025</a>
Department of Justice, <a href="#">Family Justice Strategy 2022-2025</a>
Department of Justice, <a href="#">Youth Justice Strategy 2021-2027</a>
Department of Justice, <a href="#">Zero Tolerance: Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence 2022-2026</a>
Department of Justice and Equality, <a href="#">LGBT Ireland Strategic Plan 2019-2021</a>
Department of Justice and Equality, <a href="#">LGBT Ireland+ National Youth Strategy 2018-2020</a>
Department of Justice and Equality, <a href="#">The Migrant Integration Strategy 2017-2020</a>
Department of Justice and Equality, <a href="#">National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020</a>
Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform, <a href="#">Digital Inclusion Roadmap 2023</a>
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