BETTER OUTCOMES BRIGHTER FUTURES

Whole of Government Approach to Tackling Child Poverty

October 2017
Contents

1. Introduction 4

2. Child Poverty Target 5
   Progress on Target 5
   Other Poverty Indicators for Children 7
   European Context 7

3. Role of Social Transfers 9
   Impact of social transfers on income inequality in the EU 10

4. EU recommendation on child poverty and the three Pillar approach 11

5. Whole of Government approach 14

6. Access to Adequate Resources 16
   Income Supports 16

7. Access to Affordable Quality Services 26
   7.1 Childcare 26
   7.2 Prevention and Early Intervention 29
   7.3 Family Support 35
   7.4 Education 36
   7.5 Health 47
   7.6 Housing and Sustainable Communities 54

8. Children’s Right to Participate 56
   Structures for children and young people’s participation in decision-making 56
   Citizen Participation Unit
   Dáil na nÓg 58
   Children and Young People’s Participation Support Team 58

9. Next Steps 62
Table of Figures

Figure 1: Progress on the child-specific social target 6
Figure 2: At-risk-of-poverty rate for children in the EU-28, 2015 9
Figure 3: Poverty reduction effect of social transfers for children in the EU-28, 2015 10
Figure 4: Impact of social transfers on income inequality in the EU-28, 2015 11
Figure 5: Employment and Poverty Reduction 21

List of Tables

Table 1: Children to be lifted out of poverty to meet 2020 target 7
Table 2: Other poverty indicators for children 7
Table 3: Family Income Supplement and 2015 Weekly Poverty Threshold Lone Parent Comparison Figures 22
Table 4: Whole of Government Approach to Achieve Child Poverty Target 63
1. Introduction

The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People (Better Outcomes Brighter Futures) - BOBF - is the first overarching national policy framework for children and young people (aged 0-24 years), developed and led by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs on behalf of the Government. The purpose of this framework is to coordinate policy across Government to achieve better outcomes for children.

Under the BOBF framework child poverty was identified as a priority, and in conjunction with the Advisory Council, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) formed an ad hoc group with the objective of working with key officials from other relevant Government Departments and NGOs (including the Society of St Vincent de Paul, National Youth Council of Ireland, Barnardos, One Family and the Children’s Rights Alliance) towards the adoption of a whole of government, multi-dimensional approach to tackling child poverty. The group was co-chaired by DEASP and the Children’s Rights Alliance.

Whole of Government Approach to Tackling Child Poverty

The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, in conjunction with partner Departments, has produced a paper detailing the whole of Government approach to tackling child poverty. This paper emphasises the need for a combined approach to tackling child poverty levels in Ireland, involving both income supports and services.

The structure of this paper is informed by the European Commission’s Recommendation on ‘Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage’, which sets out sets out a robust framework to address child poverty and promote child well-being across three pillars:

- **Access to adequate resources;**
- **Access to affordable quality services;** and
- **Children’s right to participate.**
2. Child Poverty Target

In 2014, as part of the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People (*Better Outcomes Brighter Futures*) the Government set an ambitious and challenging child poverty target: to lift 70,000 children out of consistent poverty by 2020, a reduction of at least two thirds on the 2011 level. In order to achieve this target the Government undertook to adopt a multi-dimensional, whole-of-Government approach to tackling child poverty which would build on the lifecycle approach employed in the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion)* and be informed by the European Commission’s Recommendation on ‘Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage’, as part of the Social Investment Package.

The specifics of the child poverty target are contained in the policy section on outcomes relating to economic security and opportunities for children and young people (Outcome 4). The target is expressed in the form of a Government commitment:

“To adopt a multi-faceted approach to tackling child poverty through seeking to reduce rates of consistent poverty for children, improving rates of parental employment and reducing the number of jobless households; and increasing investment in services that can improve child poverty outcomes. This will be achieved through commitments made to lift 70,000 children out of poverty by 2020 and increase opportunities for parents to access employment.”

Progress on Target

To give some perspective and a sense of the size of the challenge Ireland faces in trying to achieve the child poverty target in Ireland: at the height of the economic boom in 2008, when the consistent poverty rate for children was its lowest, there were 68,000 children in consistent poverty, so in order to meet the target Ireland will have to be more than twice as effective as our best ever performance. As the diagram below shows, the percentage of children in consistent poverty peaked in 2014 at 152,000 children or an increase of 6 percentage points, more than double the 2008 figure.

However, 2015 saw the first reduction in the number of children in consistent poverty since 2008. Compared to 2014, in 2015 there was a 13,000 or approximately 9 per cent decrease.
in the number of children in consistent poverty. In order to achieve the 2011 baseline target a new figure of 102,000 children will have to be lifted out of consistent poverty to meet the child poverty target by 2020.

**Figure 1: Progress on the child-specific social target**

![Graph showing progress on the child-specific social target]

Source: EU-SILC, various years

The table below shows how many children need to be lifted out of poverty each year since 2011 to achieve the 2020 target. This is a relative measure, which moves year on year subject to changes in median income. As median income rises without corresponding proportionate rises in the income of the lowest deciles, then the numbers at risk of poverty and in consistent poverty will rise.
Table 1: Children to be lifted out of poverty to meet 2020 target

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children in consistent poverty ('000s)</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Children to be lifted out of Consistent Poverty to Achieve Target ('000s)</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020 Target [Children in Consistent Poverty ('000s)]</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Poverty Indicators for Children

The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020 (Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures) sets out indicators across key national outcome areas. Table 1 details the progress to date on key indicators in relation to poverty and social exclusion among children. Consistent poverty, deprivation and at-risk-of-poverty rates for children were above the national average in 2015. This is despite Ireland’s exemplary record in terms of the poverty reduction effects of social transfers, which has consistently been amongst the best in Europe.

Table 2: Other poverty indicators for children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>National rate</th>
<th>Children (0-17 years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consistent poverty</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deprivation</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At-risk-of-poverty</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EU-SILC, various years.

European Context

Ireland’s experience in recent years has not been unique and mirrors the EU trend. 2014 marked the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Poverty Target, which is to lift at least 20
million people out of the risk of poverty or exclusion by 2020 (using 2008 as baseline year). However, as was clear from that review and the most recent figures available, Europe is drifting away from the Poverty Target. While the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU-28 had been decreasing steadily before the economic crisis, by 2013 almost 123 million people - about 24.5 % of the EU population - were at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

The characteristics of poverty across Europe have also changed substantially. Children and youth have seen the largest deterioration in their income and living conditions. The Council of the European Union acknowledges that the financial and economic crisis led to a cumulative rise of more than 4 million people at risk of poverty or social exclusion despite efforts to reach the target set by the European Union in its Europe 2020 Strategy to reduce the number.

In 2015, around 25 million children, or 26.9% of the population aged 0 to 17, in the European Union were at risk of poverty or social exclusion compared with 24.7 % of adults (18–64) and 17.4 % of the elderly (65 or over).

Ireland in a European context
In Ireland the at-risk-of-poverty rate was 16.3 per cent in 2015 which is below the EU-28 average of 17.3 per cent. Focusing on children, the at-risk-of-poverty rate was 17.9 per cent compared to the EU average of 21.1 per cent. Ireland ranks 10th of the 28 member states.
3. Role of Social Transfers

Social transfers play a pivotal role in alleviating poverty, cushioning people from the worst effects of rising unemployment and falling incomes. Indeed they are essential in supporting well-being and reducing inequalities through the redistribution of income, thereby helping to promote social solidarity. Social transfers also provide support across the life-course, from helping to protect children from the risks of inter-generational poverty and disadvantage to ensuring an adequate standard of living across all life-cycle groups.

Social transfers reduce the at-risk-of-poverty rate for children from 42.3 per cent to 17.9 per cent, a poverty reduction effect of 57.7 per cent. Ireland is among the best in the EU for reducing poverty through social transfers; well above the EU average of 39 per cent, ranking 2nd of the 28 member states.
The policy target for the adequacy of child income support measures under the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion) is that the combined value of child income support measures should represent between 33% and 35% of the main adult social welfare rate. The combined value of Child Benefit, Increase for a Qualified Child (IQC) and the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance is €64 per child per week. This is the equivalent of 34.3% of the adult welfare rate.

**Impact of social transfers on income inequality in the EU**

In 2015, Irish social transfers reduced the Gini coefficient\(^1\) from 42.8 to 29.8, an income inequality reduction effect of 30.4 per cent. Ireland was the best performing EU member state, reducing income inequality by twice the EU average. The strong performance of Ireland’s social transfer system in terms of reducing poverty and inequality is achieved in large part due to the impact of social welfare payments rather than taxes. Ireland’s social protection system has worked extremely hard since 2008 at providing a safety net to individuals who were affected by the economic recession.

---

\(^1\) Gini coefficient is the relationship between cumulative shares of the population arranged according to the level of income and the cumulative share of total income received by them. If there was perfect equality (i.e. each person receives the same income) the Gini coefficient would be 0%. A Gini coefficient of 100% would indicate there was total inequality and the entire national income was in the hands of one person.
4. EU recommendation on child poverty and the three Pillar approach

In February 2013, the European Commission adopted the Recommendation on ‘Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage’, as part of the Social Investment Package (SIP), which proposed a long-term social strategy to support children and to help mitigate the effects of the economic crisis.

Children are a particular focus of the Social Investment Package, which adopts an active inclusion approach, and emphasises the need for targeting resources and focuses on providing solutions and getting results. It aims to balance the necessary focus on economic policies with a broader consideration of societal aims and objectives as achieved through better social policies and more targeted and effective implementation.

The Recommendation itself provides guidance for EU Member States on how to organise and implement policies to address child poverty and social exclusion and to promote children’s well-being, through multi-dimensional strategies.

Within this context, the Recommendation sets out a robust framework to address child poverty and promote child well-being across three pillars: access to adequate resources; access to affordable quality services; and children’s right to participate. It especially

---

**Figure 4: Impact of social transfers on income inequality in the EU-28, 2015**

![Bar chart showing the impact of social transfers on income inequality across different EU countries. The chart indicates that social transfers have a significant impact, with some countries showing a more pronounced reduction in income inequality compared to others. The data source is Eurostat EU-SILC, 2015.]
focuses on the need for early intervention and prevention and as such national initiatives like the area-based approach to child poverty are well placed, given its focus on these issues.

Access to adequate resources refers to supporting parents’ participation in the labour market, in particular for those at a distance from the labour market and in households at particular risk such as lone parents. The key point here is that countries which perform well in terms of child poverty are also those which promote a strong labour market attachment among parents, have low rates of in-work poverty and provide effective income support systems\(^2\). A recent Eurostat\(^3\) report shows that:

- Women are more likely to live in poverty and social exclusion than men
- Young people aged 18 to 24 are more at risk
- Lack of work increases the risk of poverty or social exclusion
- Single parents face the highest risk of poverty or social exclusion
- People with low educational attainment are three times more likely to be at risk compared to those with the highest degrees

The Commission points out that tackling low pay and addressing inactivity traps are crucially important in improving access to adequate resources. Some of the key challenges then, in terms of this first pillar, include finding effective ways to support and encourage parents’ employability, for example through:

- better targeting & more outreach to single parents or (quasi)jobless couples (especially larger families) and to parents (particularly women) from disadvantaged and, especially, migrant or ethnic minority backgrounds;
- increasing opportunities for parents to participate in subsidised employment or training programmes;
- developing more tailor-made assistance for parents from disadvantaged backgrounds and developing more support and back up services, and
- improving access to information about programmes.

---


However, in order to ensure that the strategies outlined above are successful it is crucial that they are based on a solid foundation of well-funded and accessible services, particularly in the areas of childcare and education.

In terms of **access to affordable quality services**, the EU Recommendation stresses the need to reduce inequality at a young age by investing in early childhood education and care, using it as a long term social investment.

The Recommendation makes clear that child poverty is not simply a monetary problem and so tackling it effectively will require a multidimensional approach which encompasses a broad range of responses based on access to affordable, high quality services in the areas of childcare, education, healthcare, housing and social protection services. Indeed, all the evidence points to childcare and education as playing a particularly important role in preventing the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

Finally, **Children’s right to participate** is about supporting the participation of all children in play, recreation, sport and cultural activities, as well as allowing children to express their views on matters concerning them and taking those views into account. So, on one side, there is an emphasis on the need to provide children with opportunities to participate in informal learning activities that take place outside the home and after regular school hours, while, on the other, the need to put in place mechanisms that promote children’s participation in decision-making that affects their lives is stressed.

In order to implement this three-pillar strategy, the European Commission calls on necessary **governance, implementation and monitoring arrangements**, to ensure that policies effectively address child poverty and social exclusion through comprehensive design and enhanced coordination between key actors, by: developing regular and systematic links between policy areas of high relevance to the social inclusion of children and strengthening synergies between key players, particularly in the fields of education, employment, health, equality and children’s rights; working towards mainstreaming children’s policies and rights into key policies; promoting close cooperation and regular dialogue between public authorities at all levels, social partners, local communities and civil society organisations; supporting and further developing the involvement of children; strengthening the use of evidence-based approaches. The National Policy Framework for
Children and Young People can provide the framework for just such an approach. The rest of this document will attempt to use the structure of the three pillar approach in order to lay out an evidence-based and practical way towards reducing child poverty in Ireland. The document includes commentary from the relevant Government Departments in relation to on-going and planned activities.

5. Whole of Government approach

The Irish Government defines poverty and social exclusion as follows:-

"People are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and other resources people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities which are considered the norm for other people in society."

This means that people are living in poverty if they cannot afford to do the things that most people take for granted. However, poverty is also about not having access to the supports and services which allow us all the opportunity to fulfil our potential. Clearly then, a whole of government, multidimensional approach is crucial because income supports alone will simply not meet the challenge. Cash support payments for children are only one piece of the jigsaw in addressing the issue of child poverty. While protecting children and young people from poverty and social exclusion is about ensuring that they have adequate income and resources it is also about ensuring that they can live in decent houses, have access to good quality education and health-care, and have every opportunity necessary to develop and to participate as equals in society.

Some children are more at risk of poverty and social exclusion. These include: children of lone parent families, children in large families; persons with disabilities; migrants and members of ethnic minorities; the homeless; the unemployed; persons living in areas of urban or rural disadvantage and Travellers. This list is not exhaustive. It is also often the case that persons experiencing extreme forms of poverty and exclusion are found to have multiple forms of vulnerability. In terms of a targeted approach and addressing the needs of a particular vulnerable group in 2017 the Department of Justice and Equality launched the
new National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021, which was drawn up in consultation with other Departments and Traveller and Roma representatives.

The updated *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion*[^4] identifies a wide range of targeted actions and interventions to achieve the overall objective of reducing poverty. The Government has agreed 14 updated high level goals for the period 2015-2017, an increase from 12 in the previous period. They consist of reformulated and updated versions of the high level goals from the existing NAPinclusion along with new goals based on new and emerging issues. The goals include a focus on early childhood development, youth exclusion, access to the labour market, migrant integration, social housing and affordable energy.

In line with the strategy adopted under the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion* there must be a greater emphasis on services and activation as a means to tackle social exclusion. The BOBF Framework has established a shared set of outcomes for children and young people towards which all government departments and agencies, statutory services and the voluntary and community sectors can work, to ensure a coherent response for children and young people. It therefore provides the best approach to co-ordinate the work of Government and NGOs in tackling poverty.

In 2016 the European Commission issued a Country Specific Recommendation which required Ireland to expand and accelerate the implementation of activation policies to increase the work intensity of households and address the poverty risk of children. The Recommendation also called for Ireland to pursue measures to incentivise employment by tapering the withdrawal of benefits and supplementary payments and improve the provision of quality, affordable full-time childcare.

So, in line with the commitment made in BOBF, it is of crucial importance to remove any barriers to employment, particularly through increasing the affordability of childcare and afterschool services, meeting EU childcare targets and encouraging the kind of flexible working arrangements which are beneficial to both employees and employers.

Again in the context of BOBF, the Government has recognised the strong link between parental participation in the labour market, maternal educational attainment and children’s living conditions and has asserted that tackling disadvantage is most effectively achieved through active inclusion strategies which combine supports for parents to access education, training and employment with adequate income support and access to essential services, including, along with affordable and accessible childcare, health, housing and social services.

In tandem with the commitments made by the DEASP, a number of partner Departments have made commitments, the realisation of which will be of crucial importance in reducing child poverty. These include:

- DCYA and its role in Early Childhood Care and Education and in prevention and early intervention and in the area of childcare generally;
- DES and the ongoing review of DEIS;
- DoH and its programme of healthier lifestyles for children, which will tackle childhood obesity and seek to address inequalities in health outcomes for vulnerable groups, including those experiencing poverty. In addition the rolling-out of Universal GP care for all children under six years of age is another positive development.
- DHPLG’s work to develop child and youth friendly communities and in its commitment to adopt a housing-led approach to end long term homelessness.

6. Access to Adequate Resources

Income Supports
The DEASP continues to work to determine the optimal design of child and family income supports to maximise their effectiveness and efficiency in reducing child poverty, while improving employment incentives.

In the context of BOBF the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection has committed to implement a number of measures in this area. These include:

- reforming the One-Parent Family Payment Scheme so that lone parents have access to a range of supports and services designed to provide them with pathways to work while acknowledging their caring responsibilities;
- reforming labour market activation initiatives so that they actively promote progression into the labour market.

**Child Income Support Policy**

The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection spends in excess of €3.2 billion per annum specifically on children. The broad objectives of Child and Family Income Support (CFIS) programmes are:

- to provide assistance to all households with children in recognition of the higher costs incurred in child-raising and child care in a way which allows parents’ choice in how this is undertaken, and
- to provide targeted assistance to no or low-income households with children in a way which minimises labour market disincentives or positively contributes to labour market incentives in order to reduce poverty in households with children.

The investment is delivered through a number of different payments to families with children.

- **Child Benefit**: Expenditure on Child Benefit is estimated to be over €2 billion in 2017. Child Benefit is currently paid to around 623,000 families in respect of some 1.2 million children.

- **Increase for a Qualified Child (to primary social welfare payments)**: IQCs are paid at a rate €29.80 per child per week. It is estimated that the cost of IQCs in 2017 will be over €578.9 million.

- **Family Income Supplement**: FIS is currently paid to around 57,000 families in respect of some 127,000 children. Expenditure on FIS is estimated to be of the order of €422 million in 2017.

- **Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance**: The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance (BSCFA) helps eligible families with the extra costs of clothing and footwear when children start school each autumn. Some 155,000 families with some 284,000 children benefitted from the scheme in 2016. 2017 payment rates have been increased from €100 to €125 for children aged 4 to 11 years and from €200 to €250 for children aged 12 years and over and attending secondary school. The additional funding for the increase in rates brings the total
allocation for the allowance this year to €47.4 million, an increase of €10 million on what was originally provided.

- **School Meals** scheme spending will be approximately €48 million in 2017.

### Additional Supports to Families with Children

The Back to Work Family Dividend (BTWFD) scheme was announced as part of Budget 2015, with applications accepted from 5th January 2015. The scheme is intended as an additional tool to further encourage eligible individuals to make the transition from welfare to work. It builds on the existing range of supports the Department currently provides to employers and individuals (including Intreo services, Family Income Supplement (FIS) and other working age payments) which allow an individual to combine welfare and work in order to encourage customers to progress into employment. Over 8,170 families are now benefitting from the Back to Work Family Dividend, with a total of 16,500 beneficiaries (as at 25th September 2017). The revised estimates for 2017 provide €23 million for the Back to Work Family Dividend Scheme.

Domiciliary Care Allowance

Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA) is a monthly payment for a child, aged under 16 with a severe ([see note](#)) disability who requires ongoing care and attention, substantially ([see note](#)) over and above the care and attention usually required by a child of the same age. Expenditure for 2017 is estimated at €138 million.

Under the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection’s School Meals Programme, funding is provided towards the provision of food services for disadvantaged school children benefitting some 1,400 schools and organisations and over 200,000 pupils. The primary objective of the programme is to provide regular nutritious food to children. Spending on the School Meals scheme will be in the region of €48 million in 2017, an increase of 13.6%.

A range of other payments which are not specific to families with children are also available and these include:

- Fuel Allowance
- Exceptional Needs Payments.
Budget 2017
For the first time since 2009, the Budget increased weekly welfare rates for working-age adults. As part of Budget 2017 the weekly rates of payment for working age (under 66 years of age) increased by €5 a week with proportional increases for qualified adults. Specifically there is a package of measures supporting lone parents in Budget 2017, aimed at encouraging them into the workplace and into education, and helping to reduce their childcare costs.

Budget 2017 measures which benefit lone parents

- All lone parents on One-Parent Family Payment and Jobseeker’s Transition and Jobseekers Allowance will benefit from the €5 increase in the weekly rates of payment.

- An 85% Christmas Bonus was paid in December 2016 to recipients of a long-term Social welfare payment, including lone parents.

- A new €500 annual Cost of Education Allowance will be made available to Back to Education Allowance participants with children from the next academic year in September. This will help parents, including lone parents, to return to education.

- The income disregards for the One Parent Family Payment and Jobseeker’s Transition payment were raised by €20, from €90 to €110 per week. This benefitted lone parents earning more than €90 per week. For those earning €110 per week or more, it increases the combined social welfare and earnings income by up to €15 per week.

With the onset of the recovery, the Government has been in a position to introduce a range of tax and welfare improvements, such as the increases in core weekly rates for working-age adults, Child Benefit, FIS income thresholds, additional investment in childcare provision and reductions in USC. The Social Impact Assessment (SIA) of Budgets 2016 and 2017 show average household incomes increasing by 1.6% (€14.30 per week) and 1% (€9.20 per week) respectively. Lower-income households, those in the bottom income quintiles, received higher than average gains.
Households with children were the biggest beneficiaries of Budget 2016, including working lone parents and unemployed couples with children. Non-earning lone parents and couples with children gained most from the measures in Budget 2017. The Budgets provide greater rewards for working, with over 80 per cent of the unemployed being substantially better off in work.

**Employment and Poverty - The links**

While income support remains crucial, passive income support is not sufficient in itself if poverty and social exclusion are to be adequately addressed. A key way to tackle child poverty is to support parents into employment.

The links between work and poverty reduction are well-established; employment is critical as a route out of poverty. Creating inclusive labour markets is an important element in addressing the needs of those furthest from the labour market and with the highest poverty risk. This is recognised in *A Strategy for Growth: Medium-Term Economic Strategy 2014-2020*:

“The Government’s purpose is to ensure a job rich recovery and to set Ireland on the path to sustainable prosperity, which will provide jobs and opportunity for our people, provide high quality public services and encourage innovation in business and across society. This will enable the building of a fairer Ireland by helping to reduce inequality and improve poverty outcomes across society, with a particular emphasis on child poverty in line with the Programme for Government” (p 15).

The diagram overleaf outlines the link between the level of unemployment and rates of ‘at risk of poverty’ and deprivation. The main contributor to lowering poverty and deprivation is successful macro-economic policy, which leads to growth, higher employment and lower unemployment. Therefore, improvements in economic performance will impact on poverty and deprivation levels, but there will be a lag factor.
There are now more than two million people at work, last year the target of moving 20,000 people from long-term unemployment to work was exceeded, and the Live Register has fallen below 300,000. All of these milestones were passed in 2016 for the first time in eight years. Unemployment has fallen from its peak of 15 per cent to 6.1 per cent in September 2017.

Well-paid and secure employment for those most marginalised from the labour market is the most effective anti-poverty strategy. Paid employment reduces poverty when it provides an income that is sufficient to lift those households out of poverty.

In terms of tackling income poverty and lifting families out of consistent poverty the examples below show that families with one adult and with 19 and 40 hours of employment are in receipt of a combined income from earnings, Family Income Supplement and Child Benefit payments, substantially above the AROP thresholds (the examples below do not include the payments under the Back to Work Family Dividend scheme which could provide additional support). For couple families, the suite of income supports available, which include FIS, Child Benefit, Jobseeker’s Allowance and Benefit payments for claimants...
working up to three days, and the Back to Work Family Dividend, can again provide incomes substantially above the relevant AROP thresholds.

Table 3: Family Income Supplement and 2015 Weekly Poverty Threshold Lone Parent Comparison Figures - (Poverty Threshold 60% median equivalised nominal disposable incomes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Adult Household Number of Children</th>
<th>Hours worked p/w</th>
<th>Earnings @NMW</th>
<th>FIS Income Limit</th>
<th>FIS Payable</th>
<th>Child Benefit Payable</th>
<th>Total Income Payable</th>
<th>2015 Weekly Poverty Threshold</th>
<th>Income above poverty threshold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>€175.75</td>
<td>€511</td>
<td>€202</td>
<td>€32</td>
<td>€409.75</td>
<td>€305.86</td>
<td>€103.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>€370.00</td>
<td>€511</td>
<td>€85</td>
<td>€32</td>
<td>€486.60</td>
<td>€305.86</td>
<td>€180.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>€175.75</td>
<td>€612</td>
<td>€262</td>
<td>€64</td>
<td>€501.50</td>
<td>€381.76</td>
<td>€119.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>€370.00</td>
<td>€612</td>
<td>€146</td>
<td>€64</td>
<td>€580.00</td>
<td>€381.76</td>
<td>€198.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>€175.75</td>
<td>€713</td>
<td>€323</td>
<td>€96</td>
<td>€594.75</td>
<td>€457.65</td>
<td>€137.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>€370.00</td>
<td>€713</td>
<td>€206</td>
<td>€96</td>
<td>€671.80</td>
<td>€457.65</td>
<td>€214.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For low income workers with less than the minimum hours of employment for FIS and working on a casual basis up to and including 3 days per week, jobseeker’s schemes provide in-work income support through daily disregards and tapered withdrawal of payments.

Furthermore if a person cannot meet the 19 hours threshold or if their hours vary significantly from week to week the Department offers a number of other supports these include One-Parent Family Payment (OFP) and Jobseeker’s Transitional Payment (JST) and the Part-Time Job Incentive (PTJI) Scheme.

The Single Affordable Childcare scheme, announced in Budget 2017, will make childcare more affordable for more families.

---

5 Equivalence scales: a set of relativities between the needs of households of differing size and composition, used to adjust household income to take into account the greater needs of larger households. In Ireland the national scale attributes a weight of one to the first adult (aged 14+) and 0.66 to each subsequent adult and a weight of 0.33 to each child.
Despite significant levels of State spending on lone parents, which exceeded €1 billion per annum from 2008 until 2012, lone parents continue to be significantly more at risk of poverty compared to the population as a whole.

In 2004, at the height of the economic boom, lone parents were over four-and-a-half times more at risk of poverty than the rest of the population. In 2015, lone parents continue to be two-and-a-half times more at risk of poverty than the rest of the population.

The latest Quarterly National Household Survey for quarter 2 2016 contains information in respect of employment rates by family composition. In the year commencing 1st July 2015 to 30th June 2016

- The number of lone parent families who were in employment increased significantly by 3.6 percentage points to 56.4%. This represents four times the increase of all adults with children in employment over the same period.
- The number of lone parents whose youngest child is aged between 6-11 years of age increased by 7.5 percentage points to 57.2%. This group experienced the single largest increase in employment.

These increases are based on all lone parents and reflect the increase in economic and employment growth generally. The magnitude of the increase for lone parents specifically, however, many of whom would have been affected last July by the reforms, is clearly significant.

This SILC data for 2015 also shows that being at work reduces the consistent poverty rate for lone parents by three-quarters, highlighting that the best way to tackle poverty among lone parents is to assist them into employment.

Access to the labour market is particularly important for tackling poverty in welfare-dependent households. The *Pathways to Work 2016 - 2020* strategy is focusing on making sure jobseekers can get access to good quality work, training and education opportunities. Secure and fairly paid work is the best protection against poverty. Behind every new job is a person or family benefitting from the wider economic recovery. *Pathways to Work* will
continue with reforms to make work pay, and increase engagement with employers to provide greater opportunities for those seeking work. JobPath through more frequent and intensive engagement is continuing to support people who are long-term unemployed and those most at risk of becoming long-term unemployed to secure and sustain paid employment. The Government acknowledges that it must do all it can to stimulate the demand for labour, whilst simultaneously readying jobseekers for work, and ensuring that working always pays.

PathWays to Work - Delivering for People who are long term unemployed.
- Over 26,000 people who were long term unemployed in December 2015 have entered into and remained in employment during 2016
- Headline target for 20,000 long-term unemployed people to move into employment during 2016 exceeded by over 33%
- Number of long-term unemployed people on the live registered falls faster than for other groups by 18%. – This compares with a reduction of 13% overall
- Long-term unemployment rate of 4.2% is now less than half the peak level of 9.5% (2012) and 16% lower than 2015 rate (Q3 2016 vs Q3 2015)

In the PathWays to Work strategy published in February 2016 the Government prioritised the reduction of long-term unemployment as a key strategic goal. This strategy focus reflected the Government’s determination that the experience of past recoveries would not be repeated. In previous recoveries people who were long-term unemployed got left behind - high levels of long-term unemployment persisted for a considerable period even during a period of strong economic growth.

The actions taken by Government as part of Pathways to Work are helping to make sure that this time around long-term unemployed people benefit from of the economic recovery
- Over 70,000 long-term unemployed people now have access to the support and advice of a case officer via the new JobPath service to help them prepare for, pursue and secure employment. The first set of performance data is very encouraging

---

For example during the recovery of the 1990s and even with strong economic growth the number of long-term unemployed people on the Live Register increased from 98,000 to 134,000 between 1990 and 1993 and stayed at that level until 1997. – It took seven years for the economic recovery to be reflected in a reduction in the number of people claiming long-term jobseeker payments.
indicating that 25% of people using the service have secured and sustained full-time employment. In addition independent customer satisfaction research indicates very high levels of satisfaction with the service by clients.

- The JobsPlus recruitment subsidy continues to encourage employers to recruit people who were long term unemployed – the number of employee registrations doubled during 2016 and there are now c. 5,400 people benefitting from this subsidy, about 66% of who were more than 2 years unemployed. Over 90% of people are retained in employment when the subsidy expires.
- The take-up of new and existing back-to-work incentives has increased. For example the number of people benefitting from the Family Income Supplement has increased by over 1,600 during 2016, while over 13,000 families are now benefitting from the Back to Work Family Dividend – an increase of about 30% year-on-year. In addition over 10,000 people have moved onto the new Housing Assistance Payment – This payment, which is a differentiated rent payment, replaces rent supplement for those with a long term housing need and can enable unemployed people to retain some housing support when they return to full time work.

The Government is not taking this progress for granted and is committed to ensuring that long term unemployed people will remain the focus of its efforts over the coming years. Towards this end

- A target to help a further 20,000 people move from long-term unemployment into work has been set for 2017.
- A further 60,000 people will be provided with access to the JobPath service.
- A new Working Family Payment will be developed to improve the financial return of employment for families.
- A new action plan for Jobless families will be published to extend the employment services of the State to all adults in families suffering unemployment – not just the ‘principal earner’
- A new work experience programme will be introduced to replace the JobBridge scheme that was closed in 2016.

Clearly then, the challenge of supporting parents into employment is being met and the Department of Social Protection’s range of in-work supports for families is having
measureable success in meeting this challenge. While well-paid, sustainable employment is the ultimate goal it is clear that even very limited hours of employment play a critically important role in lifting families out of income poverty. A 2013 study which evaluated the relative performance of 27 member states, found that in terms of access to adequate resources the best performing states combine three main elements: a strong labour market attachment among parents; low rates of in-work poverty and effective income support systems. It is to the second, equally important pillar of the Social Investment approach that we move now.

7. Access to Affordable Quality Services

7.1 Childcare
High cost of childcare prohibits parents from accessing employment. This is a particularly pertinent issue for lone parents.

Background
The provision of childcare is essential to enable parents to participate in the workforce and to obtain an income that provides and acceptable standard of living for them and their children.

Quality childcare can also make a significant contribution to child development in the early years of a child’s life, which is a crucial foundation for future development.

According to the OECD childcare costs in Ireland are the second highest in the OECD for couples and the highest in the OECD for lone parents8. This goes some way in explaining one of the contributory factors of the low labour-market participation for women after the age of 30 and single parents.

Budget 2016 provided an additional €85m in new childcare funding for the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. This represented a significant step towards providing high quality and accessible childcare to all families who need it. It marked the beginning of a

---


multi-annual programme of investment in childcare. Budget 2017 followed through with provision for the full year costs of initiatives rolled out in Budget 2016, including the extension of the ECCE free pre-school year into a second year and funding to ensure full participation of children with disabilities in the ECCE programme through the Access and Inclusion (AIM) model.

Affordable Childcare

Of particular importance in tackling poverty is the issue of affordable childcare. At present, the cost of childcare is a significant barrier for parents wanting to take up work, education or training. The introduction of Free Pre-School Year in 2010 helped to address affordability issues. It was estimated that by age of five, 96% participated in the Free Pre-school Year programme. One in five would not have otherwise sent their children to pre-school without the scheme: this went up to 36% among the lowest income category.\(^9\) Research in 2014 highlighted the unequal access to centre-based childcare prior to the age of 3 which was strongly associated with social class.\(^10\) Similarly, another study among five year olds suggested that children from different type of family backgrounds attended different childcare types.\(^11\) The extension of the ECCE Pre-School Year into a second year has commenced in September 2016 with the first children availing of a second year. When enrolment is complete, 127,000 children will be participating in the free ECCE scheme, up from 67,000 in 2015.

A Single Affordable Childcare Programme:

Budget 2016 resourced a dedicated Project Team to develop a Single Affordable Childcare Programme to provide working families with good quality childcare at a cost they can afford. This single programme which will commence in 2017 will replace a number of existing targeted measures. These include the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS), the Training & Employment Childcare (TEC) Programmes, comprising After-School Childcare (ASCC), Childcare Education & Training Support (CETS), and Community Employment


\(^11\) Children in non-parental care performed better at tests that those solely in parental care; but accounting for differences in child and family background characteristics and home learning environment, there was no differences in scores between groups. The authors suggest that this is related to the fact that children from different type of backgrounds have attended different childcare types. Mc Ginnity et al, 2015.
Childcare (CEC). The Single Affordable Childcare Programme will provide a new simplified subsidy programme, provided through both community/not-for-profit and private childcare providers. The objective is to make childcare more affordable for more families.

Budget 2017 provided additional funding for the scheme’s development and initial roll-out, to include both a targeted and a universal element. Parents will qualify for the targeted element based on their net income. Subsidies will be available for children aged from 6 months up to 15 years and will meet families’ full-time and part-time childcare needs, including outside of school hours and during school holiday time. The highest levels of subsidy will be provided to those on low incomes, approx. €8,000 a year based on the maximum of 40-hours childcare a week. This will help families to overcome disadvantage and contribute to a reduction in child poverty.

In addition, the scheme will include a universal measure for parents of children aged from 6 months to three years. For families with incomes above the threshold for the targeted element of the scheme, up to €80 per month will be provided towards childcare costs. This equates to over €900 per annum for parents working full time and will be paid pro-rata. Both elements will be payable to childcare services registered with Tusla (The Child and Family Agency) and will also include a small number of child-minders.

**Increase in children accessing childcare**

In 2017, the expected number of children benefitting from the new scheme is estimated at 79,000. This includes 25,000 children who will benefit from the universal element. Many of these children are expected to already be using services. An estimated 54,000 children will benefit from the targeted element, including 31,500 children who already receive support under the current targeted schemes and 22,500 new beneficiaries. Some of the new beneficiaries are also expected to be within the system already, although paying full cost. The number of children benefitting is expected to rise further in 2018 as demand for the new scheme increases, to 64,000 targeted beneficiaries and 26,000 universal beneficiaries, i.e. 90,000 children in total will be supported under the new scheme.

**Quality Childcare**

Childcare must be affordable, however it must also be of good quality. The expansion of
early years’ services in recent years were matched by increasing demand for regulation, standard and curriculum development as well as increased professionalisation of the sector that started from a low base\(^\text{12}\). Through the Early Years Quality Agenda, several measures were adopted to raise the quality of early years care and education in Ireland such as furthering the implementation of Síolta, National Quality Framework for Early Childhood and Education, the wider implementation of Aistear, the National Curriculum Framework, a more comprehensive and broader-based inspection regime and the development of professional expertise among staff. The key current measures in place to ensure quality childcare include:

1. **Audit of childcare quality:** to provide a solid evidence base on which to build quality. Periodic audits will measure the impact of investment on higher quality.

2. **Learner fund:** Increased investment in the learner fund to raise qualification level of staff will help Ireland’s childcare sector to move towards a professionalised workforce that characterises high quality childcare systems.

3. **The National Síolta Aistear Initiative** which is supporting rollout and co-ordination of Síolta, the National Quality Assurance Framework and Aistear, the National Curriculum Framework for Early Years.

4. **Provision of Better Start mentoring, advice and support service to early years providers in partnership with Childcare Committees**

5. **Enhanced inspection:** Budget 2016 provided for an expanded childcare inspection team to monitor compliance with new childcare regulations, and to build education focused inspections. Budget 2017 has provided further funding for these initiatives.

### 7.2 Prevention and Early Intervention

Effective prevention and early intervention is essential to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

**Background**

There is an undeniable link between poverty and other forms of disadvantage: child’s

performance in schools was strongly linked to mother’s education while participation in physical exercise, organised sport and cultural activities is related to social class and parental income\textsuperscript{13}. There was also evidence of social gradient emerging in terms of obesity and diet among both three and nine-year olds while children in jobless households (caregiver never worked) were significantly less likely to be rated as very healthy compared to other children.\textsuperscript{14} Furthermore, behavioural difficulties and emotional problems tend to be more frequent among three-year old children living in more disadvantaged circumstances (lower socio-economic circumstances and lone parenting)\textsuperscript{15} and among nine-year olds in the lowest education category\textsuperscript{16}. Quality prevention and early intervention services can help to halt and reverse poor outcomes among those children who often live in poor households. In recognition of this fact, significant investment has been made by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Atlantic Philanthropies in evidence-based and evidence informed approaches to prevention and early intervention in working with disadvantaged children and young people through programmes such as the Area-Based Childhood Initiative and Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative. Those initiatives have used internationally acclaimed evidence-based programmes in the areas of child development, child well-being, parenting and educational disadvantage such as Triple P Positive Parenting Program, The Incredible Years Programme, Hanen, PAX Good Behaviour Game as well as Irish ones such as Preparing for Life and the Community Mothers Programme, with substantial evaluation having been carried out (or in the process of being carried out) to capture learning (e.g. Ten Years of Learning: Prevention and early intervention services in children and young people’s services\textsuperscript{17}). While many of those programmes have worked directly with children and their families, a number of measures have targeted services for the purpose of improving their capacity to respond to the needs of those children. Further efforts are under way to identify best approaches to transfer that learning into mainstream services.

\textsuperscript{14} Williams, J., Murray, A., Mc Crory, C. and Mc Nally, S. (2013). Growing Up in Ireland: Development from Birth to Three Years
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid. Also, Statham, J. (2013) Prevention and Early Intervention in Children and Young People’s Services: Improving Child Behaviour. Dublin: Centre for Effective Services.
\textsuperscript{16} Williams, J. et al (2012).
Policy development

As a result of placing prevention and early intervention at the centre of policy frameworks such as *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, where this is a cross-governmental priority, a strategic approach has been taken to embed evidence-based and evidence-informed prevention and early intervention approaches in all sectors. *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* advances a model where universal services are the main providers of prevention and early intervention services but are combined with targeted effective intervention to further support children at risk. There are several relevant commitments in the policy framework related to prevention and early intervention such as:

- Re-balancing resources to place a greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention
- Exploring the provision of enhanced maternal ante-natal and early childhood development service
- Providing universal and targeted evidence-informed parenting programmes
- Increase investment in high quality early years care and education
- Profiling key risk factors for poor outcomes among children and young people.

The ultimate goal is to enable all services regardless of geographical areas to reverse and prevent poor outcomes among children. This is helped by the current robust efforts to mainstream existing and emerging learning from initiatives to support prevention and early intervention in policy, provision and practice.
Key learning on prevention and early intervention

This is being progressed by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, and a subgroup of the Advisory Council worked with Officials in 2016 and 2016 to develop initial thinking on prevention and early intervention. An EU Peer Review on prevention and early intervention services was held in February 2016, and the following key learning from a range of EU Countries and NGOs was identified\(^\text{18}\):

- The pre-birth and 0-3 years are vital to a child’s future development. Prevention and early intervention are a real long-term investment.
- Political will is important to ensure adequate resources and a long-term approach. This needs to be built and constantly reinforced.
- A broad holistic policy mix is essential, as well as support for parental employment and adequate child and family benefits.
- Develop a system-wide approach that is multi-dimensional, strategic and integrated.
- Combine universal and targeted services as this will increase public support and help to improve the quality of services.
- Focus on local level and coordination is important.
- Reach out to children and families most at risk.
- To ensure quality, invest in building capacity across agencies, including training and mentoring for professionals.
- Data and evaluation is important for evidence-based policy, as is involving stakeholders.
- Foster the participation of children, parents and communities, for better service delivery.
- Put children’s rights at the heart of policy and programme development.
- Working with families is vital but not a substitute for children’s rights and services.
- The EU level can provide valuable support through, for example, benchmarking, monitoring and recommendations to Member States.
- It is necessary to strengthen the status of social policies vis-à-vis economic governance.

---

Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming the learning from the Area Based Childhood Programme and related initiatives to ensure that the benefit of evidence-informed approaches are provided to more children, and on a more sustainable basis.

There have been significant policy, organisational, institutional and practice developments impacting on the range of sectors and settings working with and for children and young people over the past decade. All such developments have increasingly focused on the importance of adopting an evidence-based approach to prevention and early intervention. The challenge is how to mainstream the learning from these initiatives. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs has in the past defined mainstreaming as “the process of Integrating individual programmes and practices into existing (universal) services in education, health, social services etc.,” (2013:4).¹⁹

Mainstreaming does not have a commonly agreed definition. It can imply the wholesale transfer of programmes and practices into existing services, or be perceived as prizing the importation of a programmatic solution to a complex problem. Mainstreaming can be viewed on a range of levels:

1. **Provision**: mainstreaming or formalising the establishment of services on a more secure footing in terms of funding i.e. structural issues and service delivery mechanisms. This includes the introduction of new approaches or programmes, and the realignment of existing services and models.

2. **Programmes**: mainstreaming or the insertion of set, standardised programmes into service provision.

3. **Practices**: mainstreaming or establishing certain approaches as a practice response/contributing to a suite of practice responses, for example through in-service training and ongoing mentoring.

4. **Learning**: mainstreaming or transferring and utilising learning derived from evaluations, monitoring and assessment processes, referring to and including those from service provision, programmes and practices.

¹⁹ Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2013. Application form and Information for Area Based Responses to Child Poverty. Dublin, DCYA
Currently DCYA are ensuring mainstreaming the learning in this area via the following:

- Finalisation of the *Mainstreaming the Learning* document (DCYA Task Group, ABC Interdepartmental Group).
- Findings of the EU Peer Review.
- Development of the Quality and Capacity Building Initiative.
- Planning regards sharing the learning in prevention and early intervention event.

**Quality and Capacity Building Initiative (QCBI)**

These key points are informing the development within DCYA of the *Quality and Capacity Building Initiative* that aims to take a coordinated approach to enhance capacity, knowledge and quality in prevention and early intervention for children, young people and their families, with a focus on those experiencing disadvantage. In implementing QCBI, the initiative will engage with professionals working with children and young people as well as relevant departments, sectors and bodies including supporting the implementation of Prevention Partnership and Family Support Programme by Tusla and Nurture Programme by HSE. The Children and Young People Services’ Committees will also be considered as a key local implementation structure in the programme.

First, the programme seeks to implement a more extensive and deeper evidence-based infrastructure and better aligned data systems that lead to improved access and use of data and evidence. In doing so, it will develop an information hub while also collecting the learning from prevention and early intervention programmes and approaches to date. Drawing on those steps, it will further assist in the capacity building of local organisations and groups working directly with children in utilising data, evidence and robust planning and implementation approaches based on an outcome-based framework as well as facilitating the overall planning, monitoring and commissioning activities of Children and Young People Services’ Committees. The programme will also involve the mainstreaming of effective learning in halting and reversing poor outcomes among children and young people by engaging with various national and local structures. Lastly, the programme will aim to ensure quality in prevention and early intervention approaches by informing the development of standards in this area. The programme is based on the premise that improved quality-focused and evidenced prevention and early intervention services will improve outcomes among children and young people and their families, especially those with disadvantaged backgrounds.
7.3 Family Support

Family support is a crucial part of a framework of services for children, young people and families, and a key part of a prevention and early intervention approach.

Statutory level

The Child and Family Agency, established in 2014 pursuant to the Child and Family Agency Act 2013, assumed responsibility for a range of functions including those of the Family Support Agency. The Child and Family Agency provides core funding for the operation of Family Resource Centres throughout the country. The functions of the Child and Family Agency under the 2013 Act include supporting and encouraging the effective functioning of families and, to that end, providing preventative family support services aimed at promoting the welfare of children. In addition, the Agency is required to facilitate and promote enhanced inter-agency cooperation to ensure that services for children are co-ordinated and provide an integrated response to the needs of children and their families.

Policy level

In April 2015, in line with a commitment in Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures – The national policy framework for children & young people 2014-2020, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs published a ‘High-Level Policy Statement on Supporting Parents and Families’20. The Statement provides the policy context for the discharge by the Child and Family Agency of its family support function. The Statement specifies that it is essential that parenting and family supports and services are designed to be fully inclusive and to recognise evolving family forms. It also underscores the importance of developing cross-agency coordination of services to children and their families.

At the core of this High-Level Policy Statement are a number of specific messages that set the policy agenda for strengthening the impact of supports to parents and families. These 29 high-level policy messages are articulated around improved interagency working, workforce development, information and evidence to inform the targeting of resources, integration of service planning and delivery, and partnership with children and their parents.

Operational level
The Child and Family Agency is currently involved in a major programme to develop and mainstream Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PP&FS) over the period 2015-2018. This Programme, launched in April 2015, is a key component of the Agency’s National Service Delivery Framework. The aim of the programme is to prevent risks to children and young people arising or escalating through building sustainable intellectual capacity and manpower within the Agency and partner organisations to perform early intervention work. This Programme is being rolled out by the Agency with financial support from Atlantic Philanthropies in excess of €8 million.
Since the launch of the Programme, the Agency has been working to progress eight main work streams identified. These comprise an area-based approach and the use of ‘Meitheal’: a National Practice Model for all agencies working with children, young people, and their families; participation; information; commissioning; public awareness; supporting parents; alternative care strategy and workforce learning & development.

7.4 Education
Education is a major factor in contributing to the development of children, their future economic independence, standard of living and overall wellbeing. Missing out on an adequate education can have negative consequences for both immediate wellbeing and adulthood.

The overriding objective of the Department of Education & Skills is to provide an education system that enables individuals to develop their full potential, participate fully as members of society and contribute to Ireland’s social, cultural and economic development. Improved educational outcomes can help to address the issue of child poverty by equipping individuals to break the cycle of consistent poverty. The underlying problems that mitigate against children and young people benefitting from education and reaching their full potential are multifaceted and diverse and often underpinned by child and familial poverty.

The introduction of DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion, underlies an intensified effort to support and keep more young people in school so that they gain real benefits from their educational experience. DEIS

http://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/guidance-documents

Meitheal is an early intervention, multi-agency (when necessary) response, tailored to the needs of an individual child or young person. http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/TUSLA-Meitheal_Toolkit.pdf
represents the first attempt to put in place an integrated educational inclusion strategy aimed at tackling educational disadvantage in Ireland, irrespective of the underlying issues.

DEIS Plan 2017, which was launched on 13th February 2017, provides a roadmap for the renewal of DEIS over the coming years. DEIS Plan 2017 contains over 100 actions to be delivered by a range of actors including schools. These consist of:

- A new model of identifying schools using centrally held independent data;
- DEIS-specific targets for literacy and numeracy at both primary and post primary levels;
- Targeted supports to build capacity of Principals and teachers in DEIS schools;
- Additional NEPS supports for DEIS schools;
- Measures to improve transitions across the education continuum;
- Measures to improve interagency working in the delivery of supports in and around schools;
- Measures to encourage innovation and creativity in schools through a Schools Excellence Fund
- Development of a comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to monitor implementation, inform future policy and provide feedback to schools.

Implementation of the actions of DEIS Plan 2017 are being progressed by the Department of Education and Skills in collaboration with other Government Departments and agencies, education partners and schools.

In terms of improving educational outcomes, DEIS remains the Department of Education and Skills policy instrument to address educational disadvantage by focusing on addressing and prioritising the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities, from pre-school through second-level education (3 to 18 years).

The DEIS Action Plan represented a major shift in emphasis away from individual initiatives. Instead of each addressing a particular or singular aspect of educational disadvantage it adopts a multi-faceted and more integrated approach. Supports under DEIS are designed to address the needs of schools which require significant additional resources to supplement and support the mainstream teachers where the enrolment consists of a high
percentage of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. A key component of the DEIS programme is the emphasis on target-setting and measurement of progress and outcomes.

A range of supports are provided under DEIS to both primary and post primary schools including additional financial and personnel resources as well as access to the Home School Community Liaison Scheme (HSCL) and School Completion Programme (SCP). These two key DEIS supports are managed by the Educational Welfare Service of Tusla as part of its integrated service delivery model (under the Child and Family Agency Act 2013, Tusla has statutory responsibility for school attendance, participation and retention). Early interventions are key to reversing many of the underlying issues and obstacles to progression and achievement in education. Often the first indicator for an ‘at-risk’ pupil is poor attendance and participation in school. Accordingly, the key DEIS supports of HSCL and SCP as well as the statutory Educational Welfare Officers working alongside and supporting schools is critical to combatting educational disadvantage and improving educational outcomes for children living in communities where disadvantage and poverty can be the principal determinant of their outcome in life.

The Department of Education and Skills has communicated information to schools in relation to the rollout of DEIS Plan 2017 to ensure open and transparent dialogue on all aspects of the Plan.

Details of the Identification Process which was used to assess levels of concentrated disadvantage of the pupil cohort in the school has been provided to schools. This includes details of the datasets used, the methodology developed to match these datasets and to calculate the levels of concentrated disadvantage in individual schools as well as the methodology used to determine urban/rural status of a school (Primary Sector only).

DEIS Plan 2017 contains an ongoing work programme in relation to both the identification of schools and the manner in which additional supports under DEIS will be allocated. The next phase of this work programme will involve updating the model to take into account:

- 2016 National Census of Population Small Area data
- 2016/17 POD and PPOD data
It is expected that this exercise will be completed in the coming months, after which it is planned to make available to schools information related to their own data.

Implementation of the Plan will include further analysis to examine other variables known to be strong predictors of educational disadvantage in the context of resource allocation and further policy development in terms of the degree of disadvantage in schools and the intensity of support.

In the 2017/18 school year the DEIS programme is available in 902 schools serving a total of 182,727 pupils and represents an investment of in 2017 of €115.27 million by the Department of Education and Skills. Additional funding is provided by the Departments of Social Protection and Children and Youth Affairs to support the School Meals Scheme and School Completion Programme in DEIS schools.

The DEIS programme is subject to evaluation by the ERC and the DES Inspectorate to assess pupil achievement outcomes and planning in schools participating in the Programme. From evaluations to date there is clear evidence that the DEIS programme is having a positive effect on tackling educational disadvantage. Longitudinal testing of primary school pupils in 2007, 2010, 2013 and 2016 found that overall performance had improved, but noted that continued supports would be required to maintain and build upon this progress. The Interim Review Report of the National Strategy on Literacy and Numeracy (2011-2020) highlighted a continuing gap between learners in schools with the highest concentration of disadvantage and those in other schools in both reading and Mathematics. Although the DEIS programme does not cater for a homogeneous group of schools, and it is therefore difficult to specify universal targets for them, it was nevertheless considered appropriate to introduce measures to further focus attention on reducing the gap between DEIS and non-DEIS schools, in the form of DEIS specific targets for the second half of the Strategy’s implementation.
Furthermore the DES Leaving Certificate Retention Rates of Pupils in Second Level Schools 2009 Entry Cohort (July 2016) show that the improvement in DEIS schools’ retention rates in recent years, has been significantly higher than the overall improvements nationally – up from 68.2% for the 2001 entry cohort to 82.7%.

In addition to provision in schools, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) also supports a range of additional resources across the education continuum from early years through to adult and lifelong learning.

The objective of DES policy on early years’ education is to improve the quality of educational provision for children in the 0-6 age group (which includes children in infant classes in primary schools.) The Department’s Early Years Education Policy Unit is co-located within the Department of Children and Youth Affairs where it works closely with the Childcare Directorate of that Department on the educational elements of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. These elements include supporting the implementation of Aistear, the early Childhood Curriculum Framework and Siolta, the National Quality Framework for early Childhood Education. The National Siolta Aistear initiative which commenced in 2016 is supporting the wider implementation and rollout of both frameworks, including the development of material, resources and CPD for Early Years practitioners. DES is working in partnership with DCYA and the NCCA on this initiative. The DES Inspectorate has responsibility for evaluating the quality of education provision in early-years settings participating in the ECCE Programme. In addition to the provision of resources under the DEIS programme to address educational disadvantage in Junior and Senior Infant classes, the DES also invests some €6.3 million in targeted early years interventions in inner city primary schools.

The Department also funds a range of supports for young people who are at risk of dropping out of school, or who have already become disengaged from the mainstream education system. These include Youth Encounter Projects, Youtheach Centres, and a

number of other centres where Education and Training Boards provide teaching resources in particular local community settings.

SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Authority, has been tasked with ensuring the provision of high quality further education and training programmes that support the active inclusion of all learners and enable every citizen to fully participate in society. Education and Training Boards are responsible for the delivery of education and training courses and provide a broad range of flexible provision including the Post Leaving Certificate programme, as well as second-chance opportunities including Youthreach, the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI), and adult education including family literacy courses and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses nationwide. ESOL provision is of particular importance in encouraging the successful integration of the migrant community.

The National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education is an important measure in achieving increased equity of access to our higher education institutions and meeting the objective of ensuring that the student body reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland’s population. A particular objective of the Plan is to encourage students from under-represented groups to progress to higher education and to become role models and mentors for other students.

The recently published Action Plan for Education 2016 -2019 includes a number of actions which are relevant to the Child Poverty Target:

**School Admissions**

- The Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 which was published on 6th July 2016 aims to make it easier for parents to enrol their children in a school that meets their needs. Publication of the Bill delivers on a commitment in the Programme for Government to publish new School Admissions legislation taking account of current draft proposals and addressing issues including publication of school enrolment policies, an end to waiting lists, introduction of annual enrolment structures, and transparency and fairness in admissions for pupils and their parents.

- The Bill is currently progressing through the Houses of the Oireachtas.
School Costs

- Strengthen the focus on reducing school costs for parents by increasing the financial support for book rental schemes, as resources permit, in order to reduce/eliminate school book costs for parents.
- Strengthen the focus on reducing school costs for parents by restoring capitation funding over a three–year period, as resources permit.
- Place a requirement within a Parents and Learners Charter for schools to take account of the views of their parental communities when making decisions on matters that have a financial impact for parents.
- In April 2017 Circular 32/2017 issued to school authorities and ETBs regarding measures to be adopted by schools to reduce the cost of school uniforms and other costs.

Wellbeing

- The Action Plan for Education also commits to increasing the take up of Mental Health Programmes, strengthening Guidance Counselling and strengthening NEPS with a new focus on whole school policies. Guidelines on Wellbeing in Junior Cycle have been developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) to support the Framework for Junior Cycle 2015. From September 2017 all students entering first year will study a new area of learning at Junior Cycle called Wellbeing. The Action Plan for Education commits to providing additional NEPS psychologists to support new intervention strategies for staff and pupils, and offer immediate support to schools in cases of critical incidents.

Provide an enhanced level of Educational Psychological Services for DEIS Schools

- NEPS has recruited an additional eleven psychologists this year, specifically to further enhance the educational psychology support it provides to DEIS schools. This includes supporting schools with the implementation of interventions at a preventative and early intervention level, in additional to ensuring that those pupils with emerging and complex learning and emotional needs will have access to educational psychology support. These eleven psychologists allow for:
  - The extension of an enhanced NEPS service to the additional schools afforded DEIS status in 2017.
- The delivery of training to teachers in DEIS primary schools in the Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management programme (an evidence-based programme for teachers, partnering with parents, which strengthens social and emotional competence in early primary school pupils).
- The delivery of training to teachers in DEIS primary and post-primary schools in the FRIENDS programmes (evidence-based programmes that reduce anxiety and promote coping, resilience and school-connectedness in children and young people).
- The extension of the Student Support Team project to an additional cluster of 20 post-primary schools.

**Literacy and Numeracy**

- The Report from the Interim Review of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy was published in March 2017. The Report shows the significant progress which has been made, especially in the area of literacy, under the Strategy since 2011 and highlights areas for particular focus across the lifetime of the Strategy, to 2020. As a result of the Interim Review, the original targets in the Strategy have been revised and updated, in the Report, in particular where achievements are already at or near the benchmark set in 2011. In order to keep focus on schools with the highest concentration of disadvantage, a set of discrete targets have been identified in literacy and numeracy for DEIS schools, linked to the DEIS Plan 2017. An additional target focused on the key priority group of high achieving students was also included, since not enough of our students are achieving at the highest levels. Improving our achievements in numeracy and embedding achievements gained in literacy will also be a focus, with particular attention on literacy for and through the Irish language and digital literacy.

**School leaving age/school completion**

Education is crucial to combatting poverty and breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty and social exclusion. The School Completion Programme aims to retain young people in the formal education system to completion of the senior cycle and to generally improve school attendance, participation and the retention of young people who are risk of educational disadvantage. The programme is a targeted intervention aimed at school
communities identified through the Department of Education and Skills’ DEIS Action Plan 2017. It provides targeted supports annually to approximately 37,000 children.

Since 1 January 2014, Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, under the remit of DCYA, has had operational responsibility for the School Completion Programme, including the allocation of funds to local projects. A review of the programme was undertaken by the Economic and Social Research Institute on behalf of Tusla and published in October 2015. Tusla has taken a number of actions to address the findings in the review and to strengthen the operation of the programme for the future.

Improving attendance and participation in education, particularly for vulnerable children, is an important priority for the Department. The Programme for Government commits to publishing a new School Completion Strategy to further improve school completion rates, particularly in disadvantaged areas. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs will work closely with the Minister for Education and Skills to develop this Strategy and in the context of the DEIS Plan 2017 to secure good educational outcomes for all children, especially those at risk of educational disadvantage.

The Programme for Government states that: “The new Government will seek to increase mandatory schooling to age 17 and examine how we can further improve school completion rates, particularly in disadvantaged areas.” At present, under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 the minimum school leaving age is 16 years (it was previously 15), or the completion of three years of post-primary education, whichever is later. The EU2020 headline target for early school leaving is 10%. The national target set by Ireland is 8%. The EU average is currently 12%. Ireland’s current share of early school leavers (i.e. 18-24 year olds with at most lower secondary education and not in further education and training) fell from 10.8% in 2011 to 9.7% in 2012, 8.4% in 2013 and 6.9% in 2014 and 2015 and to 6.3% in 2016 representing very positive progress in excess of Ireland’s target.

The National Youth Strategy (2015-2020) sets out as a priority commitment to “promote the development of an integrated approach to support young people at risk of educational disadvantage and early school-leaving.”

Following the commitment in the Programme for Government, increasing the minimum school leaving age to 17 is being progressed by DCYA Youth Affairs and Educational Welfare Unit. This Unit is also responsible for school completion policy, and the National Youth Strategy.

Tusla is responsible for ensuring that every child attends school regularly, or otherwise receives an appropriate minimum education. Their emphasis is on helping schools, families and children, rather than imposing penalties for non-attendance at school. It employs educational welfare officers at local level throughout the country to provide support and advice to parents and schools and to follow up on absences from school. They also help to co-ordinate all policies concerning attendance and educational welfare. Tusla’s remit includes responsibility for the Home School Community Liaison Scheme, the School Completion Programme and the Educational Welfare Service (EWS).

Tusla also:
- Monitors school attendance, and takes a range of measures where children do not attend school
- Maintains a register of children who are not attending a recognised school
- Maintains a register of young persons of 16 and 17 years of age who leave school early to take up employment and makes arrangements for their continuing education and training in consultation with providers and employers
- Collects data on school attendance and non-attendance, suspensions and expulsions
- Intervenes in relation to proposed school expulsions
- Publishes reports on school attendance at primary and post primary schools.

The commitments in the Programme for Government will be progressed by DCYA in a whole of government manner, with inputs from Tusla, the Department of Education and Skills, and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

The School Meals Programme (SMP)
The School Meals Programme is an important component of policies to address the educational and health disadvantages associated with an inadequately nutritious diet in childhood. The SMP makes the link between the regular consumption of nutritious food by
children and improvements to children’s diet, school attendance, punctuality, energy levels and ultimately better educational outcomes for all children, particularly those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds.

The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection commits to continuously improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the School Meals Programme and consider inclusion of DEIS schools not currently benefitting under the programme. The BOBF policy framework recognises the potential of the programme for improving health outcomes. Under the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection’s School Meals Programme, funding is provided towards the provision of food services for disadvantaged school children benefitting some 1,700 schools and organisations and over 250,000 pupils. Some €42 million was made available for the scheme in 2016. This has been increased to €47.5 million for 2017. The primary objective of the programme is to provide regular nutritious food to children.

There is a particular focus on the provision of breakfast clubs under the scheme which provide very positive outcomes for vulnerable children in terms of their school attendance, punctuality and energy levels. In 2016/2017 there were over 700 breakfast clubs in operation benefitting over 85,000 children at a cost of approximately €8m.

In line with the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, Better Outcomes Brighter Futures, any additional funding is being used to provide payments to schools which are part of DEIS, with a particular focus on the provision of breakfast clubs. Analysis shows that 95% of DEIS schools were participating in the School Meals Local Project Scheme in 2016/2017.

The scheme continues to be extended and improved in DEIS schools. Funding towards breakfast for all children and lunch for the majority of children (up to 90%) are available to all DEIS schools. Due to budgetary constraints it is not always possible to pay the maximum rate per child for all lunch clubs.

DEASP participated on the Interdepartmental Group on the Review of DEIS, with reference to the school meals programme. A programme to inspect all schools in the scheme over a 3 year period has commenced.
The main DEASP Budget 2017 provision for children is increased funding which provides for the inclusion in the scheme, from September 2017, of up to 240 new schools supporting 47,000 children. This includes support to those schools being brought into DEIS and the extension of the scheme to breakfast clubs in non-DEIS schools, which is the first time in many years that increased payments will be provided outside of DEIS. The 240 schools selected, following engagement with the Department of Education and Skills, have been contacted by the Department to join the scheme from September 2017 for school breakfasts. School breakfasts have been shown to increase attendance and improve concentration. Spending on the School Meals scheme will be in the region of €47.5 million in 2017, an increase of 13.6%.

7.5 Health

Health is a fundamental to the well-being of children. The commitment to tackle inequalities in health outcomes for identified vulnerable groups is welcome. In addition the development of healthy behaviour and attitudes, for example in relation to healthy eating and physical activity, is crucial. It is therefore hugely positive that the Department of Health has identified as a priority its programme of healthier lifestyles for children which will seek to tackle priorities such as childhood obesity and address inequalities in health outcomes for vulnerable groups, including those experiencing poverty.

Get Ireland Active! The National Physical Activity Plan and the new Obesity Policy and Action Plan, A Healthy Weight for Ireland, have a core focus on children and young people, and are supported by the recently published Maternity Strategy in terms of supporting families to give every child the best start in life. Child protection is also a key theme in Tobacco Free Ireland, the national tobacco control policy, and it underpins the Public Health (Alcohol) legislation. Both policy areas also focus on denormalising tobacco and alcohol use.

In addition, the Health and Education sectors are collaborating closely on the health and wellbeing agenda so that students will be equipped with the key skills and knowledge to enable them to make healthier life choices more confidently, as well as enhancing their overall development.

The Department of Education and Skills has issued guidance for primary and post primary
schools about measures to promote healthy lifestyles. The guidance was drafted in consultation with the Department of Health and the HSE and encompasses measures to promote healthy eating, healthy vending, as well as the promotion of P.E. and Physical Activity.

A National Healthy Workplace Framework is also in development, aspects of which will support the health and wellbeing of parents in the workforce as well as at entry/transition points.

Under the new Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE) Strategy to address Energy Poverty, the Department of Health and HSE are supporting DCCAE and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) on a ‘warmth and wellbeing’ pilot which aims to establish if the provision of extensive energy efficiency upgrades to homes can have a positive effect on the health and wellbeing of the people living in the home. While the first year of the pilot targeted over-55s with chronic disease, it is intended to broaden the reach of the scheme in its second year of operation. The scheme will be extended to include families with children aged under 12 years who have a diagnosed chronic respiratory condition.

Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People (0-18 years)
Health related therapy supports and interventions for children with a disability are continuing to be developed. Most children with a disability or developmental delay will continue to have their needs met by their local primary care service. HSE Disability Services provides services for children with more complex needs.

HSE Disability Services is currently engaged in a major reconfiguration of its existing therapy resources for children with disabilities into multi-disciplinary geographically based teams, as part of its National Programme on Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People (0-18 years). The key objective of this Programme is to bring about equity of access to disability services and consistency of service delivery, with a clear pathway for children with disabilities and their families to services, regardless of where they live, what school they go to or the nature of the individual child’s difficulties.
Evidence to date from areas where this has been rolled out shows that implementation of this programme will have a positive impact on waiting lists both for assessments and therapies. €8 million in additional funding was invested in 2014 and 2015 to fund 200 additional posts to support the implementation of the new model. A further €4 million in additional funding was provided for 75 therapy posts in 2016. Full implementation of the Progressing Disability Services Programme is expected before the end of 2017.

**Respite**

The HSE’s 2017 National Service Plan commits to 200 new emergency places provided to people with a disability, and 185 new home supports / in home respite supports for emergency cases. While these places are not specific to children, it is expected that they will increase the capacity to provide respite to children with a disability in 2017.

**Primary Care**

**Initiatives in Therapy Services**

**Speech and Language**

€4 million was provided under the HSE’s National Service Plan 2016 to specifically focus on speech and language therapy waiting lists in Primary Care and Social Care for children up to 18 years old. From the funding, the HSE is appointing 83 new fulltime staff in primary care to address speech and language therapy waiting lists - for initial assessments, for initial therapies and for further therapies by prioritising the longest waiting children. Since approval of the initiative mid-2016, the change in the overall 0-18 waiting lists for the period 31 July 2016 – 31 December 2016 was a 9.3% reduction.

In addition, the HSE has introduced a number of initiatives specifically in relation to speech and language therapy services that are aimed at improving access to these services, such as therapists increasing clinic based work and providing family centred interventions in a group, as opposed to a one-to-one setting, whenever possible.

The HSE National Service Review Group is undertaking a complete review of the current model of service delivery which will inform decisions in relation to the longer term resource allocations. The group expects to report at the end of Q1 2017 when a revised model for children’s speech and language therapy services would be agreed and implemented.
**Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy**
Service Improvement Initiatives have also been established in relation to Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy to review the existing models of care and to develop new models that will be standardised across CHOs to improve waiting times. While these are not specific to 0-18 year olds, they will benefit from the new model of care.

**Psychology in Primary Care**
Funding of €5m was provided in the 2016 National Service Plan for the development of Psychology services in primary care with a focus on enhanced counselling interventions for children and adolescents. The HSE expects to recruit over 114 assistant psychology posts to deliver rapid access low intensity psychological interventions for young people. (D/PER sanction is awaited).

The HSE is recruiting 20 staff grade psychology posts for services for children in geographical areas where there are inadequate numbers of posts in place. A computerised cognitive behavioural therapy programme for young people will be provided which will be adapted from the work already completed for the programme for adults.

**Paediatric Homecare Packages**
Children with complex needs being cared for in their own homes is a small but increasing proportion of those receiving community services. The HSE Primary Care Division carried out a review of current policy and practice in the provision of home care to children with complex medical conditions in 2014. As a result of this review, the process of implementing recommendations started in 2015. 474 paediatric homecare packages were supported in 2016 and new funding was made available in 2017 to support 514 packages.

**Universal GP care for U6s and the future extension to U12s and U18s**
GP care without fees for all children under six years of age commenced on 5 August 2015. Approximately 365,900 children under the age of six can now access GP services without fees being charged through a medical card or GP visit card. This represents roughly 85% of the under 6 population.

A new GP contract for services for children under six, which includes age-based preventative focused on health and wellbeing and the prevention of disease, as well as an
agreed cycle of care for children diagnosed with asthma, was also finalised in 2015. Approximately 94% of GPs providing public general medical services have signed up to the new under-sixes service contract. Over 29,600 children have been registered for the asthma cycle of care by their GPs as of 13th February 2017.

The Programme for Partnership Government commits to extend in phases, and subject to negotiation with GPs, free GP care to all children under 18 years of age. The extension of GP care without fees to all children aged 6-11 years is a priority, however the timetable for implementation will be subject to the outcome of ongoing discussions with GP representatives on this and other contractual matters.

**Domiciliary Care Allowance**

New legislation is being drafted that will effectively mean that all children in respect of whom a DCA payment is made will automatically qualify for a medical card and, therefore, no longer be subject to the medical card means test at any point in the future while in receipt of DCA. The legislation is currently being prepared and will be brought before the Oireachtas as quickly as possible.

**Acute Hospital Division**

**Direction for services for children**

The future direction for services for children should be to provide as much care as close to home as possible, and to achieve this we must strengthen both primary and community care of children and adolescents. We must learn from international experience and work together across disciplines throughout the country to develop a child health service that meets the current and future needs of our children. We need to strengthen links between primary and secondary care, and provide additional support to general practitioners to manage childhood illness closer to home. Currently, rates of hospitalisation vary across the country and are too high in many places. We need to appropriately plan for new morbidities such as increasing incidence of obesity, diabetes and inflammatory bowel disease, the surge in atopic disease and allergy, and a growing need for childhood disability and child and adolescent mental health services.

This thinking has informed the development of a new model of care for paediatric and neonatal services. It provides a *blueprint* for neonatal and paediatric services into the
future, and should form the basis for all planned service developments in this area over the next number of years. In the coming years, there will be a unique opportunity to improve services for children with the building of a new children’s hospital and implementation of this agreed model of care.

**National Clinical Programme for Paediatrics and Neonatology**

The National Clinical Programme for Paediatrics and Neonatology was established in 2011 as a joint clinical initiative between the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Faculty of Paediatrics, Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI). The overall aim of this Programme is to ensure high quality care is provided to children throughout Ireland, from the point of first contact. In 2012, the clinical leads and programme manager undertook an extensive process of engagement, which included a formal site visit to every paediatric unit in Ireland. The outcomes of these site visits were set out in framework document which formed the basis for the national model of care for paediatric and neonatal services, developed in collaboration with healthcare professionals working in the wide range of different paediatric subspecialties.

**National model of care for paediatric and neonatal services**

The model of care sets out the vision for high quality, accessible healthcare services for children in Ireland, from birth to adulthood. It spans a range of care settings from community services to tertiary and quaternary care, and sets out requirements in a range of paediatric subspecialties for infrastructure, staffing and processes, and the expected outcomes for children accessing each service. The Model of Care supports the Government Policy 'Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures' which sets out how the health system intends to achieve the best outcomes for children, young people and families. This Model of Care highlights that all children should be able to access safe, high quality services in an appropriate location, within an appropriate timeframe, irrespective of their geographical location or social background, and across care boundaries. It describes the best way to develop an integrated network of paediatric services nationally, which is easy to access with primary care and community linkages. The model establishes a service whereby the new children’s hospital will become the hub for paediatric care nationally and all regional paediatric units will function as part of a national collaborative for the best care of infants and children.
Overview of the Model of Care
Essentially, all children should be able to access safe, high quality services in an appropriate location, within an appropriate timeframe, irrespective of their geographical location or social background. The future direction is to provide as much care as close to home as possible.
This requires the development of an integrated network for paediatric services nationally, with the new children’s hospital as the hub and the regional and local paediatric units as the spokes facilitating delivery of the majority of care locally with outreach from tertiary paediatric subspecialties to the regional units.

The model provides protocols under which children in various parts of the country can access the same standards of screening, diagnostics and treatment. Its sets out the responsibilities of paediatric departments in a primary, secondary and tertiary setting, detailing the level of services to be provided and how these departments will support each other and each patient.

The model aims to deliver services that are timely, effective, safe, child and family-centred, efficient, and equitable. Essentially, all children should be able to access safe, high quality services in an appropriate location, within an appropriate timeframe, irrespective of their geographical location or social background.

Key Components of the Model of Care
The key components of the model of Care are:

- Infrastructure (urgent and emergency care, inpatient and outpatient facilities);
- Staffing (doctors, nurses, health and social care professionals and others);
- Processes (standardisation of care pathways nationally);
- Outcomes (developing robust key performance indicators and outcome measures).

The model of care includes individual models of care for each of the 35 specialties in the disciplines of neonatology and paediatrics e.g. dermatology and gastroenterology, while also covering generic specialities such as palliative care and disabilities. It also addresses the issue of the transition to adult services.
General Paediatrics plays a central role in the new model. For the most part, all children should be firstly referred to a general paediatrician and then onwards to a paediatric subspecialist if necessary.

Additional support will need to be provided to general practitioners in the community to manage childhood illness closer to home by forging closer links between GPs and their local or regional hospital, regular CPD sessions, rapid response clinics, user-friendly algorithms for common conditions seen in primary care and GP access to diagnostics.

The development of a national electronic health record linking all care settings for children will be an essential feature.

Implementation of the Model of Care
The HSE Clinical Strategy and Programmes Division and Acute Hospitals Division are jointly establishing an implementation steering group to develop a robust implementation plan for the Model of Care, led out by the Integrated Care Programme for Children.

Workforce planning for doctors, nurses and health and social care professionals is a critical element and plans will be set out for the evolution from a consultant-led model to a consultant-delivered model with expanded roles for health and social care professionals.

The Model of Care will be updated in response to changing patient needs and will be regularly reviewed.

7.6 Housing and Sustainable Communities
A clear aim of Outcome 4 on Economic Security and Opportunity in BOBF is that children should be able to live and grow up in a safe, healthy, sustainable and child-friendly environment that supports their developmental and learning needs. Furthermore the Government recognises the strong link between the quality of a child’s housing and their learning outcomes.

It is generally acknowledged that access to appropriate accommodation can be an important factor in addressing household poverty; appropriate housing is the bedrock of communities, being a place of shelter from where people can develop and make the most
of life’s opportunities including education and employment. While the State housing supports offered through housing authorities are targeted at the household level, rather than offering services to children, it is important that children, as part of a household, can live and grow up in sustainable communities where they can participate and prosper.

The issues prevalent in the housing sector for almost a decade now are an affront to this agenda. The economic collapse that occurred towards the end of the last decade, and the associated damage to the construction sector resulted in a shortage in housing supply and in turn this has resulted in increased levels of housing insecurity and increased rates of homelessness.

Addressing these housing and homelessness issues is a key priority for Government and it is recognised that the long-term solution to the current homeless issue is to increase the supply of homes. Government’s commitment in this regard is expressed in the multi-stranded, action-oriented Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness. This plan provides outlines Government’s approach to achieving the key housing objectives and to tackle homelessness in a comprehensive manner.

Rebuilding Ireland is designed to accelerate all types of housing supply – social, private and rental. During the lifetime of the Plan some 47,000 new social houses will be provided, supported by Exchequer investment of over €5 billion, and housing output generally will be progressively increased towards the target of producing 25,000 houses per year through all channels.

The Plan provides for early solutions to address the high number of households in emergency accommodation, such as the delivery of independent tenancies through the various social housing supports programmes. This will include the delivery of increased social housing supply through new-build, acquisition and refurbishment schemes. Independent tenancies will also be provided for homeless households in the private rented sector through housing supports such as the enhanced Housing Assistance Payment. Good progress is being made in this regard with over 3,000 sustainable exits from homelessness achieved during 2016 – a record level of exits in a calendar year.
Where households find themselves residing in emergency accommodation, Rebuilding Ireland contains measures to ensure that services for families, and particularly children, in hotels and other emergency accommodation are far better, including: enhanced liaison on family support, child welfare and child protection; Family Resource Centres; access to free public transport for family travel and for school journeys; and practical supports and advice for good nutrition for those without access to cooking facilities. Furthermore, housing authorities are also pursuing the delivery of additional and enhanced supported temporary accommodation that is more suitable for the short-term accommodation needs of such households than commercial hotel arrangements. These supported temporary accommodation arrangements will provide homeless families with a greater level of stability than is possible in hotel accommodation while move-on options to long-term independent living are identified and secured. These arrangements will also facilitate more coordinated needs assessment and support planning including on-site access to required welfare, health, and housing services.

Implementation of the Rebuilding Ireland is being advanced across a number of departments and agencies, under the oversight of the Cabinet Committee on Housing, chaired by An Taoiseach, and there is a clear commitment to reporting progress, particularly through quarterly progress reports. The Plan and progress reports are available at www.rebuildingireland.ie

8. Children’s Right to Participate

Structures for children and young people’s participation in decision-making

Citizen Participation Unit

The Department Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) has a dedicated Citizen Participation Unit. The role of the Unit is to ensure that children and young people have a voice in the design, delivery and monitoring of services and policies that affect their lives, at national and local level. It collaborates in this with other Government Departments, statutory bodies and non-government organisations.

The work of the Citizen Participation Unit is guided by Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and is directed by the belief that children and young people are the citizens of today and not just the adults of tomorrow.
The work of the Unit is undertaken through:

- The development of effective structures for children’s participation in decision-making
- conducting consultations and dialogues with children and young people
- the development of evidence-based policy in keeping with national and international best practice.

The DCYA Citizen Participation Unit is committed to ensuring the inclusion of seldom-heard children and young people in participation structures and initiatives.

**Comhairle na nÓg**

Comhairle na nÓg (www.comhairlenanog.ie) are local councils for children and young people (aged 12-17) that give them a voice on the development of local policies and services. They are the recognised national structure for participation by children and young people in decision-making in all 31 local authorities. They are supported by the DCYA Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund and DCYA Participation Officers.

The Comhairle na nÓg gets young people’s voices heard in two ways: working on topics of importance to young people; and acting as a consultative forum for adult decision-makers in the locality.

**Comhairle na nÓg National Showcase**

The Comhairle na nÓg Showcase is a biennial event at which the young people from the 31 Comhairle na nÓg have the opportunity:

- To strengthen the national profile of Comhairle na nÓg through a showcase of the work of the 31 Comhairle na nÓg.
- To provide young people with the chance to network and share their experiences of what works in their Comhairle na nÓg.
- To provide policy makers, service providers and local and national politicians with an opportunity to visit the showcase and experience first-hand the successes and value of Comhairle na nÓg.
Decision-makers from all over Ireland are invited to attend the Showcase and view the stands of the 31 Comhairle na nÓg.

**Comhairle na nÓg National Executive**
Each of the 31 Comhairle na nÓg elects one representative to the National Executive to serve for a two-year period. The role of the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive is to follow up on the top recommendation from the previous Dáil na nÓg and seek to have it implemented. The National Executive has a term of office of two years, and meets once a month. The National Executive is facilitated and supported by the DCYA, who ensure that they get the opportunity to engage with appropriate Ministers, policy-makers, Oireachtas Committees and other decision-makers.

**Dáil na nÓg**
Dáil na nÓg is the national youth parliament for 12-18 year-olds. It is a biennial event, to which 200 representatives from the 31 Comhairle na nÓg are elected as delegates. The DCYA funds and oversees Dáil na nÓg, which is hosted by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. The topics discussed at Dáil na nÓg are chosen by young people themselves in the 31 Comhairle na nÓg. Recommendations from Dáil na nÓg are followed-up by the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive for the following two years.

**Children and Young People’s Participation Support Team**
The DCYA Children and Young People’s Participation Support Team comprises the staff in the DCYA Citizen Participation Unit, three regional Children and Young People’s Participation Officers and a Participation Co-ordinator/Administrator from two national youth organisations (Foróige and Youth Work Ireland).

The regional Participation Officers:
- Provide support, information and training to all 31 local authorities in the running of effective Comhairle na nÓg;
- Support the operation and development of the Dáil na nÓg process;
- Support other DCYA children and young people’s participation initiatives.
Consultations and participative initiatives with children and young people

The DCYA provides opportunities for children and young people to contribute their views on issues of national and personal importance

Current consultations

A number of consultations and participation initiatives are currently being undertaken by the DCYA, including:

- The Children’s Equality Commission process, which was established by DCYA in late 2016. The Commission aims to ensure that the voices of children who experience or understand economic hardship or poverty are directly heard and acted on by policymakers.

- Consultations with young people on the Value for Money and Policy Review of the Youth Funding programmes 2014, which examined three targeted funding schemes, the Special Projects for Youth scheme, the Young People’s Facilities and Services Fund, and Local Drug Task Force projects scheme. The schemes support the provision of youth services for young people who are at risk of drugs, alcohol misuse, early school leaving, homelessness or who are living in disadvantaged communities. The consultations will explore young people’s experience of their youth services and the impact youth service provision has in their lives.

Other recently completed consultations include:

- Consultations on the implications for children and young people of the UK’s decision to leave the EU (Brexit)
- Consultations with young people on mental health with and on behalf of the Youth Mental Health Taskforce of the Department of Health
- Consultations with children and young people on education for sustainable development on behalf of and with the Department of Education and Skills
- Consultations with transgender identified children and young people to inform Government and State policy and practice
- Consultations with children on after school care to inform the development of national standards on such care (Published as Report of Consultations with After-School Care)
• Consultations with young people on cybercrime on behalf of and with the Law Reform Commission
• Consultations with children and young people living in the direct provision system on behalf of and with the Department of Justice and Equality
• Consultations with children and young people as part of the Ireland 2016 National Commemorative Programme (published as Children Seen and Heard 1916-2016, Report of consultations with children and young people on their vision for Ireland and on remembering the children who died in 1916)
• Consultations with children and young people on development of the National Obesity Strategy (published as Healthy Lifestyles Have your Say: A consultation with children and young people)
• Consultations with children and young people on the Universal Periodic Review (published online as ‘Children and Young people’s views on Human Rights in Ireland’)

Further details and reports of consultations undertaken by DCYA with children and young people are available on www.dcy.gov.ie

National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making, 2015-2020
Ireland is the first country in Europe (and possibly the world) to have developed a cross-Government National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making (2015-2020). This Strategy was launched in June 2015, and is a constituent of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014-2020. The strategy is guided and influenced by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Goal and objectives of the Strategy
The goal of the Strategy is to ensure that children and young people have a voice in their individual and collective lives in their communities, in education, on their health and wellbeing and in legal settings. It focuses on the everyday lives of children and young people and the places and spaces in which they are entitled to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives.
The Strategy is primarily aimed at children and young people under the age of 18, but embraces the voice of young people in the transition to adulthood up to the age of 24.

**Cross Government approach**
Giving children and young people a voice in decision-making requires a cross-government response and initiatives and actions from all key Government departments and agencies are included in the strategy. Government departments and agencies are required to report to the DCYA on an annual basis under implementation structures established for *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014-2020*.

The first Annual Report on Implementation of commitments in the Strategy was published in July 2016. The Report shows a positive picture of how the Strategy is being implemented. Government departments and agencies are actively progressing 93 of the 97 agreed commitments for 2015. Government Departments and Agencies have made a strong start with 87% of the agreed commitments reaching completion or in progress. Commitments that were not met will be included in the 2016 Commitment Plan, with a series of new commitments to be reported on in 2017.

**Children and Young People’s Participation Hub**
The priority action in the strategy for the Department of Children and Youth Affairs is the establishment of a Children and Young People’s Participation Hub, as a national centre for excellence. The Hub will support Government departments and other organisations in implementing the Strategy through training, documenting best practice and developing education on children’s rights for professionals. The Hub will be established in 2017.
9. Next Steps

Achieving anti-poverty outcomes from investment in quality public services will not yield benefits immediately. However over a sustained period such an approach offers the strongest possibility to address deficits and provide the opportunities necessary for all children to develop and to participate as equals in society. Future investments need to focus on outcomes which impact positively on child poverty.

Both at national and local level, government departments and agencies have specific responsibilities to deliver on key targets and effective monitoring and implementation is essential to reaching these targets.

The BOBF Framework aims to achieve a more comprehensive and efficient monitoring process and to ensure that reporting is streamlined. The Framework has established structures to support implementation ensure accountability and enable stakeholder engagement. Structures are also in place to assess the effectiveness of the implementation and report on progress annually. There is a need to ensure that these structures and processes are utilised and optimised to best effect. The Framework can also provide a solid platform on which to build an effective and sustainable whole of government approach to tackling child poverty.
Table 4: Whole of Government Approach to Achieve Child Poverty Target

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Department Responsible</th>
<th>When</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The income disregards for the One Parent Family Payment (OFP) and Jobseeker’s Transition (JST) will rise by €20, from €90 to €110 per week</td>
<td>DEASP</td>
<td>January 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Increase funding for School Meals Programme</td>
<td>DEASP</td>
<td>January 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Provision of pre-activation supports for people with disabilities</td>
<td>DEASP</td>
<td>January 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. €5 increase in the weekly rates of payment</td>
<td>DEASP</td>
<td>March 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Farm Assist</td>
<td>DEASP</td>
<td>March 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Enhanced Taper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Introduction of Child Disregards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Publication of Social Inclusion Monitor</td>
<td>DEASP</td>
<td>March 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. €500 annual Cost of Education Allowance to Back to Education Allowance participants with children</td>
<td>DEASP</td>
<td>September 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Tackle low work intensity of households (Action Plan on Jobless Households)</td>
<td>DEASP</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Develop a pro-active approach to support Qualified Adult dependants(Pathways to Work (PTW))</td>
<td>DEASP</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Extend and intensify the pro-active engagement approach for people with a disability (Pathways to Work (PTW))</td>
<td>DEASP</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Expand pro-active engagement approach to Casuals (Pathways to Work (PTW))</td>
<td>DEASP</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Increase parental leave in the first year of a child’s life, over the next five years</td>
<td>DEASP</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Ongoing consultation with stakeholders:-</td>
<td>DEASP</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Pre &amp; Post Budget Forums</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Social Inclusion Forum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Technical Advisory Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Develop a Working Family Payment targeted at low income families</td>
<td>DEASP</td>
<td>Budget 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Publication of evaluation of the ABC programme</td>
<td>DCYA Policy Innovation Unit</td>
<td>September 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>Department Responsible</td>
<td>When</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Strategic dissemination of learning from the ABC programme</td>
<td>DCYA Policy Innovation Unit</td>
<td>2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Future community based prevention and early intervention programme to meet programme for government commitments.</td>
<td>DCYA Policy Innovation Unit</td>
<td>December 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Implementation of QCBI projects and supports</td>
<td>DCYA Policy Innovation Unit</td>
<td>2017-2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Implement QCBI project to develop national data and information hub for children’s services to improve multi-agency planning.</td>
<td>DCYA Policy Innovation Unit</td>
<td>December 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Implement QCBI project to develop a suite of evidence informed approaches through evidence matrix and interactive resources to improve services for children at risk of poor outcomes.</td>
<td>DCYA Policy Innovation Unit</td>
<td>December 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Continue to support the Children and Young People’s Policy Consortium, including in their role in monitoring progress under the departmental paper on child poverty.</td>
<td>DCYA Policy Innovation Unit</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Work with the Advisory Council for Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures on the issue of child poverty and inequality, and other issues.</td>
<td>DCYA Policy Innovation Unit</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Increase investment nationally on Tusla domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services.</td>
<td>DCYA Agency Service Reform</td>
<td>January 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. The progress of Government Departments and State Agencies in consulting children and young people about policy, legislation, services and research that affects their lives will be monitored and reported through the publication of annual progress reports of the implementation of the commitments of the National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-Making 2015-2020.</td>
<td>DCYA Participation Unit</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. The priority action in National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-Making 2015-2020 for the Department of Children and Youth Affairs is the establishment of a Children and Young People’s Participation Hub, as a national centre for excellence. The Hub will support Government departments and other organisations in implementing the strategy through training, documenting best practice and developing education on children’s rights for professionals. The Hub will be a mechanism to promote children’s participation in decision-making that affects their lives.</td>
<td>DCYA Participation Unit</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Rollout of Community Childcare Subvention (Transitional) Programme (CCST), providing free childcare to homeless children aged between 0-5 inclusive. A daily meal is included in the subvention rate.</td>
<td>DCYA Early Years</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Introduction of the Affordable Childcare Scheme, replacing existing targeted childcare schemes (CCS, CETS, CEC, ASCC)</td>
<td>DCYA Early Years</td>
<td>September 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>Department Responsible</td>
<td>When</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **30. DEIS**  
Publish DEIS Plan 2017  
Implement Actions Arising from An Action Plan for Educational Inclusion | DES | Published Q1 2017  
Q3 2017 and ongoing thereafter |
| **31. Early Years**  
Support the Implementation of Síolta the National Quality Framework and Aistear, the early years curriculum framework through the National Síolta Aistear Initiative  
Implement a national programme of Early Years Education-focussed Inspections (EYEIs) which will provide advice and support a progressive improvement in standards, leadership and teaching methodologies for the over 4,000 early years settings providing the ECCE-programme. | DES/DCYA | 2017 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Department Responsible</th>
<th>When</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32. Primary &amp; Post Primary</td>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement <em>Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life</em>, the National Strategy to improve Literacy and Numeracy among children and young people 2011-2020 and also actions from the Interim Review of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (published March 2017)</td>
<td>DES</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enact the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016</td>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Progression of this action to be reviewed again in the context of Budget 2018.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase financial support for book rental schemes, in order to reduce school book costs for parents.</td>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Progression of this action to be reviewed again in the context of Budget 2018.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commence the restoration, over a three year period, of capitation funding to schools.</td>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Q4 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place a requirement within a Parents and Learners Charter for schools to take account of the views of their parental communities when making decisions on matters that have a financial impact for parents.</td>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Q1 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finalise and publish the measures to be adopted by schools to reduce the cost of school uniforms.</td>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Q2 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To carry out a review of Guidance Services, tools and career information for school students and adults and recommend changes to improve the services available.</td>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Q4 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce Wellbeing as an area of learning at Junior Cycle, starting with all students entering First Year in 2017.</td>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Q4 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>Department Responsible</td>
<td>When</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. School Transport</td>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Actual cost of seat under the school transport scheme is heavily subsidised. Unit cost is in the region of €1,000 for mainstream or €7,000 (excl. escort) for children with special educational needs. [Primary charge €100, post primary charge €350 subject to maxima payments; no charge for eligible children with special educational needs]

School Transport charge payable is capped;
Primary children €220
Overall Family max €650

Waiver of School transport Charge for eligible children holding valid Medical cards.

No distance rule applies for children with special educational needs when determining school transport eligibility.

No school transport charge applies to eligible children with special educational needs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Department Responsible</th>
<th>When</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34. NEPS</td>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Q4 2017 and onwards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Increase NEPS time allocation to DEIS schools to enhance supports for Wellbeing through the implementation of interventions at a preventative and early intervention level, in addition to ensuring that pupils with emerging and complex learning and emotional needs will have access to the support of an Educational Psychologist. This will include:  
• Commencing the expansion of the Incredible Years Teacher programme and Friends Programmes to all DEIS schools  
• Expanding the Student Support team project to an additional cluster of 20 DEIS Post-Primary Schools | |
<p>| 35. Further Education | DES | Ongoing to 2019 |
| Implement the <em>Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019</em> | DES | 2017 |
| Research into barriers to participation in Further Education and Training (FET) is complete and is published on the SOLAS website, particular emphasis is on unemployed people and other disadvantaged groups. | DES | 2017 |
| Commission a review of the Youthreach Programme | DES | 2017 |
| Deliver FET provision to DEASP client groups, in line with Pathways to Work 2016-2020, through ETBs working closely with Intreo Offices under new protocols | DES/DEASP | 2017 |
| 36. Higher Education | DES/HEA/HEIs | 2017-2019 |
| Publish Review to identify the supports and barriers for lone parents in accessing higher education and to examine measures to increase participation. | DES | 2017 |
| Development of a number of innovative new measures through funding secured in budget 2017 to support access to higher education targeted at disadvantaged students. | DES | 2017 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Department Responsible</th>
<th>When</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>Department of Health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prioritise development of comprehensive primary care services, including advancing the phased extension of GP care without fees to those aged under 18.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Department of Health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drive, monitor and evaluate the implementation of health and wellbeing policies and strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>Department of Health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implement Tobacco Free Ireland, including the Public Health (Standardised Packaging of Tobacco) Act 2014.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>Department of Health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implement Healthy Weight for Ireland, Obesity Policy and Action Plan in partnership with other stakeholders.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>Department of Health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oversee the implementation of the Get Ireland Active! National Physical Activity Plan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>Department of Health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduce and oversee implementation of public health legislation on alcohol.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>Department of Health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Publish and oversee implementation of a new National Drugs Strategy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>Department of Health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work closely with DES, DCYA, DPER and HSE on youth mental health and wellbeing initiatives, including the National Taskforce on Youth Mental Health, and Pathfinder Project.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>Department of Health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oversee the reconfiguration of children’s disability services under the Progressing Disability Services Programme (0-18s).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>Department of Health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop and oversee implementation of the policy on future nursing and midwifery in the community to drive integration of primary care and acute nursing and midwifery services.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>Department of Health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drive and monitor implementation of the National Maternity Strategy 2016-2026.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Actions included by the Dept of Health are based on priorities set out in the Department of Health Statement of Strategy 2016-2019, which indicates the timeframe for their progression.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Department Responsible</th>
<th>When</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 48. Implementation of Rebuilding Ireland.  
http://rebuildingireland.ie/ | Department of Housing, Planning Community and Local Government | Ongoing |