
Pre-Budget 2012

Submission

to the

Department of Social Protection

September 2011



01 – 6700 120 www.treoir.ie

INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1976, Treoir is the national federation of agencies which provide services to unmarried parents and their children.

The main aim of Treoir is to promote equity for unmarried parents and their children in Ireland. Membership of Treoir is open to professional agencies providing services to unmarried parents. They are a combination of statutory and non-statutory bodies, including specialist agencies, the HSE, maternity hospitals, adoption societies and self-help groups.

The following are the core principles under which Treoir operates:

- *Treoir recognises the diversity of family life in Ireland*
- *Treoir recognises that all families, including unmarried families, have the same rights to respect, care, support, protection and recognition*
- *Treoir supports and promotes the rights of all children as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*
- *Treoir believes that all children have a right to know, be loved and cared for by both parents.*

Treoir works to achieve its aim by –

- providing a National Information Service to unmarried parents, their extended families and those working with them through answering queries made by phone/email, publications, outreach workshops etc.
- Working with workers who work with young parents
- Collaborating with other agencies to promote our aim through the federation of Treoir and agencies outside Treoir
- promoting change at every level to improve services and attitudes to unmarried parents
- promoting/undertaking research to better understand the situation of unmarried parents and their children in Ireland

OVERVIEW

Treoir has made Pre-Budget Submissions to the Department of Social Protection for many years. There are remarkable similarities in all these submissions, usually exhorting the current Minister to improve rates of payments to unmarried parents to lift them out of poverty, simplify the whole system, move from a breadwinner/homemaker model of payment to an individualised payment system, and remove the disincentives for parents to cohabit inherent in the social welfare system, to the detriment of their children.

Treoir's position has not changed. We still advocate the above changes. However, in 2011, the Irish economy is heavily in debt and we must recognise that there will be no increases in the basic social welfare rate this year.

The main route out of poverty is through employment, but (re)entering the workforce is extremely difficult given the lack of suitable, sustainable jobs and the supports and services which are needed by those outside the workforce.

In addition there are many reports and reviews regarding the Social Welfare system including Child Income Support, Single Working Age Payment, Rent Supplement, Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare. The Minister and her Department appear committed to implementing change and it is much appreciated that community and voluntary organisations are consulted in the process.

So making a substantial, detailed submission on changes to the Social Welfare system at this point in time seems futile. However, Treoir would like to make just two recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is indeed a grim picture for those living in poverty, and it is well documented that unmarried parents are known to be the most vulnerable group in terms of poverty. Our first recommendation therefore is that the basic social welfare rate is not cut in Budget 2012.

2. The NESC report – *The Developmental Welfare State* notes that the radical development of services is the single most important route to improving social protection. In the current economic climate we urge the government to focus on the provision of childcare. While of course childcare can be an issue for two-parent families, it is especially critical for families with one resident parent. Without free, or very low cost, quality, flexible childcare, there can be no possibility of work for many of these families.

For unmarried parents, especially young parents, the lack of affordable, flexible, quality childcare is the single most crucial issue in accessing education or the workforce.

The implementation of both of these recommendations would go some way towards achieving Treoir's aim of promoting equity for unmarried parents and their children in Ireland.

September 2011