



**Pre-Budget Submission to the Joint Committee on
Social Protection, Community and Rural
Development and the Islands.**

About Treoir

Treoir was founded in 1976 and is the national federation of services for unmarried parents and their families. Treoir along with its member agencies, promotes the rights and welfare of unmarried parents and their children and advocating on their behalf. Treoir recognises the diversity of Irish families and believes that all families, including non-marital families, should be valued equally and receive the same level of protection and support from the state.

Treoir works to achieve this by:

- Providing a National Specialist information Service to parents who are not married to each other, their families and those working with them by providing information through our phone service, website, and outreach workshops.
- Co-ordinating the National Teen Parent Support Programme.
- Managing the National Manager for Kinship Care.
- Promoting and supporting shared parenting.
- Undertaking and promoting research to examine issues that impact non-marital families.

Introduction

Treoir welcomes the opportunity to make a written pre-budget submission to the joint committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands.

Treoir firmly maintains that Budget2024 needs to be a child focused budget, with a view to reducing child poverty. We welcome the establishment of the child poverty and wellbeing unit in the Department of An Taoiseach and the cross departmental work of the new unit. The budget of 2023 did little to alleviate child poverty, and so we saw an increase in poverty and deprivation. We cannot look at child poverty in isolation, they are not separate from their families. The cost-of-living crisis has highlighted the vulnerability of many low-income families, and as we come out of the covid-19 pandemic we can see that those who have been impacted the most; are those who can least afford it.

Context for Budget 2024

Everybody has the right to a decent standard of living, and a dignified life. Benchmarking our social protection system to the cost of living can go some way to ensuring this happens.

Social policies that impact individuals' wellbeing and quality of life, should be a whole of government responsibility, with government departments working together to identify gaps and ensure that policies in different departments do not have a negative impact on measures designed to alleviate hardship and struggles facing disadvantaged groups each day. It is vital that all departments in government are mindful of how various policies interact with each other, how social welfare benefits interact with housing supports, or how they impact on education and training eligibility.

It is important to bear in mind the barriers and poverty traps that people experience. Loss of medical card, lack of affordable suitable childcare, loss of housing supports, are not the responsibility of the department of social protection, they do however act as a mechanism that traps people in an often-generational cycle of poverty. One parent family households are particularly vulnerable, and policies need to reflect the unique challenges they face. This is why a whole of government approach is needed to identify and mitigate these challenges.

Key asks for Budget 2024

As a matter of priority, Treoir recommends the following considerations by the joint committee for Budget 2024.

- Ensure child maintenance payments are not included as means for any social welfare benefit.
- Extend the fuel allowance to families in receipt of Working Family Payment, as a targeted measure to reduce energy poverty.
- Support Kinship care families by prioritising and fast tracking the Guardians payment.
- Increase core social welfare rates in line with the cost of living.
- Consider extending the living alone allowance to one parent families.
- Increase the qualified child payment in line with the cost of living.
- Extend child benefit to over 18's in post primary education and in receipt of the back-to-school allowance.

- That the two Departments recognise that rural areas require distinct, focussed and targeted responses to addresses poverty. That measures to address poverty are rural proofed.
- The Department of Community and Rural Development and the Island commit to increasing funding to the Community and Voluntary sector in line with the cost of living and to allow for increased demand on services provided by NGO's.

Treoir again would like to thank the joint committee for the opportunity to give this submission in preparation for 2024. Treoir's full pre-budget submission will contain these issues raised in more detail.