

Analysis of Budget 2009 and its Impact on Children

October 2008





The Children's Rights Alliance is a coalition of over 80 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working to secure the rights and needs of children in Ireland, by campaigning for the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). It aims to improve the lives of all children under 18, through securing the necessary changes in Ireland's laws, policies and services.

Membership

The Alliance was formally established in March 1995. Many of its member organisations are prominent in the children's sector – working directly with children on a daily basis across the country. The Alliance's policies, projects and activities are developed through ongoing collaboration and consultation with its member organisations. A full list is at the back of this document.

Vision

Ireland will be one of the best places in the world to be a child

Mission

To realise the rights of children in Ireland through securing the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Relevant Experience

- The Alliance is a designated Social Partner within the Community and Voluntary Pillar
- The Alliance is a co-founder of the End Child Poverty Coalition
- Recognised for its participation in the international monitoring and reporting process of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the Alliance has published two shadow reports critically evaluating progress made by the Irish State to implement the UNCRC's provisions in domestic law, policies and services

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I. OVERVIEW OF BUDGET 2009

This document aims to give an overview of the Budget and its impact on children. It is split into three sections. The first analyses Budget 2009 and provides commentary on the key issues as identified by the Alliance. The second gives detailed descriptions of the measures introduced by three key departments, without providing commentary. The final section includes useful information- including the Alliance pre-Budget submission, our post Budget press statement, and a list of our member organisations.

Budget 2009 was delivered seven weeks early, in an attempt to urgently address the economic difficulties faced by the State.

The run up to the Budget was characterised by a general sense of doom and gloom. The international banking crisis combined with the abrupt halt to the growth in the Celtic Tiger economy were well documented, and led to a general sense that a tough Budget was on the way. Politicians stressed this view, warning the public about ‘painful’ cuts, and a budget framed in the face of “the most difficult conditions in living memory”.

Despite the dismal scene-setting, Minister for Finance Brian Lenihan opened his Budget with a commitment to protect the most vulnerable. He promised to be guided by the principles of “fairness, sustainability and affordability” and outlined Government policy’s aim to “target resources at those in greatest need”. Universal entitlements, he claimed, do not target those in greatest need. In some cases there is a need to differentiate between “those who have and those who have not.”

But this rhetoric was not reflected in reality. Budget 2009 did little to protect the most vulnerable. Instead, the introduction of a 1% levy on all earned-income up to €100,000 will tip struggling families into poverty. And the combination of smaller cuts, including an increase in the threshold for the Drugs Payment Scheme, the end of the Child Benefit payment for those over 18 years, and the increase in VAT on day-to-day products, will all affect working families struggling to maintain homes and provide for their children.

There are, however, some things to be welcomed:

- the continued investment in school buildings - €581 million in 2009 – is critical to improving our education infrastructure;
- the increase of €2 in the Qualified Child payment (QCI) goes some way to targeting payments towards children in the poorest families, and though the increase was small, it demonstrates an awareness of the need to recognise the vulnerability of this group; and
- the €1.5 billion investment in Primary Care is a positive, and will make a big difference to families accessing healthcare; though it remains to be seen whether the HSE delivers the promised reform on time and on budget.

But overall, children lost out. The impact of many of the changes – particularly in terms of investing early for better outcomes for children, and building a system that prevents crises rather than simply manages them – will be deeply felt by children, particularly those that are worse off.

The Children’s Rights Alliance recognises that the Government faced tighter economic circumstances, and we understand the need to rationalise and reprioritise in the face of new challenges. While we appreciate the economic situation, it is not an excuse to break promises to children. Halting progress in areas where it can have long-term and life-long consequences – like child literacy, class sizes and early childhood education and care – cannot be justified as cost savings.

II. ANALYSIS OF BUDGET 2009

This section highlights some of the changes arising from Budget 2009 that are of particular importance to children. These issues are split into two sections – those changes that disappoint us, and those that we feel are constructive.

Key Negatives of Budget 2009

✘ **The abolition of Child Benefit for children aged over 18 years**

The Alliance regrets this decision. It is a backwards step that will have a disproportionate effect on low income families where the cost of older children remaining in education will be outweighed by the necessity to go out to work. Education is a key to social inclusion and to improving children's life chances. It is in all our future interests that young people are supported to continue to further education. Budget 2009 fails to recognise that.

✘ **The deferral of implementation of the EPSEN Act**

The EPSEN Act outlines the State's responsibilities towards children with Special Educational Needs and enshrines them in law. Budget 2009 defers its implementation and gives no indication about when progress can be expected. This is a serious failure of the State on behalf of some of its most vulnerable children. There is no excuse to further delay implementation of the EPSEN Act.

✘ **The increase in class sizes**

Despite numerous commitments by Government to reduce class sizes, Budget 2009 increases them. This is deeply regrettable. There will be 400 fewer teachers from September 2009, meaning an increase in primary school class sizes from 27 to 28, and secondary schools from 18 to 19. This will have an impact on the quality of education in our schools.

✘ **The re-introduction of a limit of two language support teachers per school**

The ceiling on language support teachers for children with English as a second language is being re-imposed (it had been lifted in 2007). This is deeply frustrating. Language learning is an essential part of integration. At a time when Ireland has unprecedented numbers of non-English speaking children in our schools, it is critical that a strong infrastructure is in place to ensure the cohesion of our future society.

✘ **The abolition of grants affecting child literacy**

Child literacy is an area of deep concern to the Alliance. Reading and writing are essential life skills, and pleasures every child should enjoy. Existing targets to improve child literacy levels are unambitious, and focused solely on disadvantaged areas. But literacy matters to every child. Budget 2009 ignored that. It cut aid for school books, and abolished the library grant to school libraries. This move will deeply affect efforts to improve child literacy. It is a big price to pay for a small cut.

✘ **The examination of taxing Child Benefit**

The Alliance is deeply opposed to a tax on the Child Benefit payment. Budget 2009 did not impose such a tax. Instead, it referred the issue to the Commission on Taxation, which will report in September 2009. The universality of Child Benefit is a way of demonstrating the value the State places on children and families. Taxing it would be an unacceptable move, which would save little money after administrative costs were considered.

Key Positives of Budget 2009

✓ **A €2 increase in the Qualified Child payment (QCI)**

Though an additional €2 is far from enough to support the poorest families, this is a critical payment to support those children that need it most. We encourage the Government to increase this payment further next year, and take real steps towards ending child poverty.

✓ **Continued investment in school buildings**

The desperate state of our school buildings was not ignored in this budget. Clear commitments to build much needed new schools and restore older ones are welcome. The environment in which children spend much of their day must be conducive to learning. The Alliance will monitor progress in this area over the coming year.

✓ **Increased funding for the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)**

The 33% increase in funding for the NEPS so that it can serve every school in the country is welcome. NEPS has been underfunded and thinly spread for too long, despite commitments to resource it outlined in the *Towards 2016 Social Partnership Agreement*. However, the funding provided for child and adolescent mental health will not cover the commitments already made by the Government in this area.

The following section looks at the changes introduced in the three principal departments affecting children: Social Welfare, Education and Health. It also looks at spending in the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, and at the rationalisation of public bodies.

1. Social Welfare

The 'Social Welfare' Budget was increased by almost €2.6 billion to €19.6 billion for 2009. Much of this additional money will be spent on welfare payments to the growing numbers of unemployed people on the live register. Improvements in Social Welfare will cost €515 million in 2009.

SPENDING

Qualified Child Increase

The Qualified Child Increase (also known as the Qualified Child Allowance) is a targeted measure for addressing child poverty. It supports children that live in families who rely on social welfare as their only income.

- The QCI was increased by €2 per week, bringing it to €26 per week (January 2009)

Family Income Supplement

The Family Income Supplement (FIS) is designed to incentivise parents into employment. FIS provides income support to about 23,000 working families in Ireland.¹

- The weekly income thresholds for FIS will increase by €10 per week per child. This will yield an increase of up to €6 per week per child. (January 2009). For full details of FIS thresholds see table 1 below.

One-Parent Family Payment

The One-Parent Family Payment is a means-tested payment to support parents who are bringing up children on their own.

- The One-Parent Family Payment was increased by €6.50 per week, bringing it to €204.30 per week. (January 2009)

The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance

The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance (BSCFA) is the key mechanism through which financial assistance is granted towards the cost of sending a child to school.

- The income disregard for the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance was increased by €50 per week to €150. This widens the group of families that have access to the payment. (June 2009)².
- The amount of the payment remains the same as it was in 2008: €200 for children between 2 and 11 years, and €305 for children between 11 and 17 years, paid annually.

Grants

Additional funding of €0.5 million was allocated to the Family Support Agency to develop a programme to support parenting skills. (2009)

CUTS

Child Benefit

Child Benefit is a payment paid to almost all parents to support them with the costs associated with bringing up a child. Child Benefit is paid to 580,000 families and helps to support 1.1 million children.

- The rate of Child Benefit was not increased for children under 18. Rates will remain the same as last year at €166 for the first and second child, and €203 for the third and subsequent children
- For children aged 18 in full time education it will be paid at half rate for 2009 (€83), and stopped in 2010. (January 2009)
 - For families in receipt of QCIs, FIS and the BSCFA there will be an increase in the QCI of €15 per week for children aged 18 to bring it up to €41 per week. This measure will cease to apply in January 2011.

The issue of taxing Child Benefit is being considered by the Commission for Taxation, which will report in September 2009. Following this report a decision will be taken in relation to the future direction of Child Benefit.

¹ Department of the Taoiseach (2008), *Towards 2016: Ten Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement, Fourth Progress Report, 2008 Review* p.131

² In 2008 a couple could earn up to €496.10 per week and qualify for the BSCFA. This year, with the increased disregard, combined with changes in adult social welfare rates, they can earn up to €559.80 and still qualify for the payment. The rates differ for lone parents. Details on the rates are available at http://www.welfare.ie/publications/sw19/sw19_sect4.html#4.7

Early Childcare Supplement

The Early Childcare Supplement is an almost universal payment originally paid to the parents of all young children under 6 years. It is intended to help parents cover the cost of their childcare needs and is administered by the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

- The age bracket for the Early Childcare Supplement was reduced from 6 years to 5 and half years. It will now be paid monthly rather than quarterly at a rate of €92. This will amount to €1,104 annually.

Table 1: FIS increases in income threshold 2008-2009

Family Income Supplement		
Family Size	Income limit 2008	Income limit 2009
1 child	490.00	500.00
2 children	570.00	590.00
3 children	655.00	685.00
4 children	760.00	800.00
5 children	870.00	920.00
6 children	970.00	1030.00
7 children	1090.00	1160.00
8 children or more	1170.00	1250.00

FIS is calculated at 60% of the difference between net weekly income (i.e. gross pay less Tax, Employee's PRSI, Health Contribution, and Superannuation) and the income limit for your family size.

2. Education

The Department of Education budget was increased €302 million to €9.6 billion for 2009. Despite this increase 'tough choices' were made in relation to spending. Allocation of monies for the year is outlined below:

SPENDING

Capital Spending

- €581 was allocated for the Schools Capital Programme.³ This funding will focus on completing 26 major projects, and starting construction on an additional 62 major projects in primary and secondary schools. 100 smaller projects will be completed on-site and another 80 projects, previously approved, will progress to completion.

School Funding

- In primary schools the capitation grant (amount given per pupil from the Department) will be increased by €21.42 per pupil to €200 per pupil
- In post-primary schools the capitation grant will be increased by €14 per pupil to €345 per pupil.

Special Needs

- €10 million has been allocated to fund enhanced measures for children with SEN pending the full implementation of the EPSEN Act (see Special Needs cuts below for further detail)
- Some of this €10 million will go towards providing all schools with the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) by the end of 2009. Expenditure on NEPS will increase by 33% to achieve this aim
- €40 million has been allocated to cover the full-year costs of additional special needs assistants (SNAs).

3 This is a decrease from €586 in 2008, but it is estimated that due to predicted lower building costs in 2009 this decrease will have little impact.

CUTS

Teacher numbers

- The number of primary and post-primary teachers in September 2009 will be about 200 fewer in each sector compared to 2008. This means larger class sizes. The number of pupils per primary school class from September 2009 will be 28 rather than the current 27. In post-primary school there will be 19 pupils to 1 teacher rather than the current ratio of 18 to 1
- The ceiling of two language support teachers per school, abolished in 2007, is to be re-imposed. Language support teachers are employed specifically to support children who do not speak English as a first language
- Teaching posts provided under disadvantage schemes previous to DEIS will be withdrawn.

Special Needs

- The implementation of the EPSEN Act has been deferred. In the meantime it is outlined that children with special educational needs (SEN) will have their SEN met on a non-statutory basis (see Special Needs spending above for further detail)

Abolition of certain school grants

- In primary schools the separate cookery grant, resource grant for language support teachers and the equipment grant for resource teachers are being abolished. (Total saving €2 million)
- At post-primary level grants for choirs and orchestras, home economics, Junior Certificate Schools Programme, Leaving Certificate Applied and others will be abolished. (Total saving €5.35 million)
- Capitation funding for Traveller pupils and capitation grants for schools that are not in DEIS but continued to receive top-up funding provided under previous disadvantage schemes will be reduced. (Total saving €4.3 million primary, €2 million post-primary).

Further funding reductions

- Aid for school books will be restricted to DEIS schools only. (Total saving €7.5 million)
- The Department will cease to fund local authorities to provide library grants to support school library services. (Total saving €2.19 million)

Youth Services

- Grants for Youth Services are being reduced from €52.6 million to €48.2 million, a reduction of just over 8%.

Teacher Education

- Teacher in-service education support funding has been decreased from €33.8 million in 2008 to €28.8 million in 2009.

School transport

- The post-primary school transport fee increased from an annual fee of €168 for junior cycle children and €234 for senior cycle children to a single annual fee of €300 for all eligible children. The maximum amount payable by a single family, regardless of the number of children using the system, will be €650 annually. Eligible children in families that hold a medical card, or children with special needs are exempt from the charges.

3. Health

The total current funding for the Health Service Executive (HSE) in 2009 will be €14.791 billion, an increase of €454 million on 2008. Only a small amount of the overall health budget will focus on children. These areas are outlined below:

SPENDING

- €10 million has been allocated to support the expanded therapy services for children of school going age. This funding is to enhance and strengthen services for children with special educational needs. The €10 million comprises €7.2 million in a full year for disability services and €2.8 million for child and adolescent mental health services. This will fund additional speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, clinical psychologists, and social workers – 125 posts in all
- €1.75 million has been allocated in 2009 for suicide prevention and to support greater service user involvement in mental health
- €12 million to cover the agreed full-year costs of the recent extension of the Childhood Immunisation Programme started in 2008
- Over €1.5 billion has been allocated to finance the development of 200 Primary Care Centres. These Centres, committed to in the *Towards 2016 Social Partnership Agreement*, will see GPs, therapists and all HSE Community Services staff brought together in locations that are convenient for the public. The HSE programme aims to have all sites identified by the middle of 2009, with the first group of 50 to open by the end of 2010 and the full complement to open in the course of 2011.

CUTS

- The threshold for the Drug Payments Scheme is being increased from €90 to €100 per month
- There will be an increase in A&E charges from €66 to €100 for non-medical card holders who attend A&E Departments without a letter from their GP
- The public statutory in-patient charge (cost of a hospital bed) will increase from €66 to €75 per night
- Employment control: There is to be a 3% reduction in the number of management/administration grades employed across the public health system. Certain key front line professional posts (therapists, social workers etc.) are to be protected by setting employment floors for those grades. Setting a floor for social work posts, for example would facilitate the reform programme initiated by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and the putting in place of necessary changes to front line services to protect vulnerable children.

4. Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs

The Office for the Minister of Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) was allocated a Budget of €539 million for 2009. Spending will include:

SPENDING

- €134 million in capital and current funds for the continued development of a national network of quality childcare facilities
- €397 million to fund the Early Childcare Supplement
- €3 million in additional monies was obtained from the Dormant Accounts Fund to support a range of targeted measures for children and young people, including those in disadvantaged areas. This will bring the total allocation to €6.15 million in 2009. This funding will support the continuation of the Early Intervention and Prevention Programme, the Playbus Scheme, and the implementation of the National Recreation Policy, including the development of a structured Youth Cafe Programme.

5. Rationalisation of public bodies

Budget 2009 merged or abolished 41 public agencies in a bid to make savings. The list below outlines key agencies affected that have relevance to children.

- The Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) will be closed. The work done by the CECDE, of ensuring quality education provision in pre-school services, will now be led by the Early Years Education Policy Unit within the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs
- The Educational Disadvantage Committee was abolished
- The functions of the Children's Acts Advisory Board (CAAB) will be absorbed into the OMCYA and other health sector agencies
- The Equality Authority and the Human Rights Commission are to fully integrate their facilities, back office and administration. Their funding was also significantly cut.⁴
- The Combat Poverty Agency will be integrated into the Department of Social and Family Affairs
- Funding from the Minister for Integration for the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) will cease. The Committee will be absorbed into the Office of the Minister for Integration.

⁴ The Equality Authority's budget was cut from €5.9 million in 2008 to €3.2 million in 2009. The Human Rights Commission budget was cut from €2.1 million to €1.9 million.

III. ALLIANCE PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION – INCOME SUPPORT MEASURES

The following is an extract of the Income Support measures requested by the Alliance in its pre-budget submission:

Child Income Support

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantees an adequate standard of living (Article 27) as a basic right for every child, but for many Irish children this right is being denied.

1.1 Qualified Child Increase

The Qualified Child Increase (QCI, also known as the Qualified Child Allowance) is a critical targeted measure (one of only a few) for addressing child income poverty. It supports children that live in families who rely on social welfare as their only income, often due to a parent's illness or disability, or full time caring responsibilities.

The Alliance supports an increase in the QCI as an immediate means of reducing the number of children in consistent poverty. We call for the additional cost of having an adolescent child in the home – as demonstrated by the Vincentian Partnership Minimum Essential Budgets research⁵ earlier this year – reflected in the level of the payment.

Budget 2009 should:

- Raise the Qualified Child Increase from €24 to €28 for children under 12 years, and from €24 to €33 for children over 12 years.

Cost: This change would cost €71 million per annum for the payment for children under 12 years, and €32 million per year for the payment to children over 12 years. Total cost: **€103 million** per annum.

1.2 Family Income Supplement

The Family Income Supplement (FIS) is designed to incentivise parents into employment. However, its take up has been lower than anticipated, and there are administrative barriers and stigma issues associated with it that have proved difficult to overcome. While FIS is not perfect, it does provide income support to about 23,000 working families,⁶ and advances made to it (and its take up) in recent years are welcome. But there is still some way to go.

For FIS to have a genuine impact on the lives of low income families its earnings thresholds must be widened to take increases in earnings and social welfare rates into account. In addition, information about FIS must be more widely disseminated and effectively communicated if take up is to be increased.

Budget 2009 should:

- Increase the income thresholds for FIS by €60 per week, and increase the income calculation of the payment from 60% to 70% of gross income
- Deliver a high profile media campaign, supplemented by a local on-the-ground campaign, to encourage take up of FIS

Cost: The cost of the increases to FIS outlined above totals **€33 million** per annum.

1.3 Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance

The cost of education, particularly at the beginning of the school year, can be a serious strain for low income families. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its *Concluding Observations* to Ireland in 2006, voiced its concern about the “de facto” cost of education and materials in public private schools, which are in many instances the responsibility of parents.⁷ The pressure of meeting these costs can disincentivise education for some families.

5 Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice (2008), *Minimum Essential Budgets for Six Households: Comparative study of four urban locations for the period 2006-2008*

6 Department of the Taoiseach (2008), *Towards 2016: Ten Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement, Fourth Progress Report, 2008 Review* p.131

7 United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2006), *Concluding Observations: Ireland*

The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance (BSCFA) is the key mechanism through which financial assistance is granted towards the cost of schooling. But despite the welcomed increases in recent years, the BSCFA still does not reflect the actual cost of returning to school. Research by Barnardos in summer 2008 found that the cost of sending a child to primary school ranged from between €367 and €465 depending on the age of the child. For secondary school pupils the figures rose to between €730 and €880.⁸ These figures included the cost of clothing, footwear, school books, photocopying and a voluntary contribution to the school. The totals are far above the current BSCFA of €200 for children between 2 and 11 years, and €305 for children between age 12 and 17 years.

Budget 2009 should:

- Commit to a multi-annual increase in the BSCFA in recognition that it is the key mechanism to support families with the cost of schooling.
- As a first step in this multi-annual increase, raise the level of the BSCFA to €250 for children in primary school, and to €350 for those in secondary school.

1.4 Universality of Child Benefit

In 2004, the Irish Government introduced a two-year Habitual Residency Condition for eligibility to the Child Benefit payment. This ended the policy of a universal child benefit payment to all children resident in Ireland. Now, children of asylum seekers and separated children are not entitled to receive Child Benefit. At the end of June 2008 there were 2,432 children living in direct provision centres. Making these vulnerable children eligible for Child Benefit would cost just 0.032% of the annual social welfare budget of over €15 billion.⁹ It is important to note that the asylum seeking families are not entitled to work. Hence they have no legitimate means of supplementing the direct provision payment (Adult €19.10 / Child €9.60 per week) they receive to provide basic and social necessities for their children.

Budget 2009 should:

- Restore Child Benefit as a universal payment by removing the Habitual Residency Condition.

Cost: This change would cost approximately **€4.8 million** per annum.¹⁰

1.5 Child Benefit

The Child Benefit payment has increased substantially in recent years: this is a welcomed development. To ensure that these increases hold their value, the Alliance calls for Child Benefit to be increased in line with inflation.

Budget 2009 should:

- Increase Child Benefit in line with inflation.

1.6 One Parent Family Payment

The Alliance supports the reform of supports for lone parent families, including efforts to removing employment disincentives and provide access to affordable childcare, training, and education. The primary objective of this new system of support must be the elimination of poverty amongst these families. Lone parents are particularly vulnerable to poverty – the 2006 EU SILC figures show that 33% of lone parent families live in consistent poverty, while 40% are at risk of poverty. Children living in lone parent households are four times more likely to live in poverty than their peers in two-parent family homes.

Budget 2009 should:

- Increase the earnings disregard for the One Parent Family Payment to €250 and increase the earnings ceiling to €500 to eliminate poverty traps.
- As a medium term measure, commit to reform and simplify the method and rate of assessing means thereby ensuring that low earners are protected and increasing earned income is incentivised.

8 Barnardos Research, August 2008, <http://www.barnardos.ie/our-latest-news/story/?story=40> accessed 28/08/08

9 Department of Social and Family Affairs, Annual report 2007

10 Calculation based on €166 as the monthly rate of payment to all of the 2432 children

NO HIDING PLACE FROM 1% LEVY

Children's Rights Alliance Budget Statement

Tuesday 14 October 2008

"The Children's Rights Alliance is disappointed with the Minister for Finance Brian Lenihan TD's first budget, as the small print relating to its claims of targeted spending in education, health and social welfare becomes clearer. Amidst the international banking crisis, we acknowledge cuts would have to be made, but Budget 2009, despite the intentions of the former Minister for Children, will do little to 'protect the most vulnerable in society'. The call for 'solidarity' and for the nation to 'all pull together' is misplaced, when careless cuts, including a 1% levy, will drive more children into poverty, rather than lift them out of it.

That said, there have been some saving graces. The €2 increase in the Qualified Child Increase (QCI), although modest, is to be welcomed. The QCI is one of the few existing measures to target income support towards the poorest families – those that are completely dependent on social welfare. The desperate state of our school buildings has not been ignored in this budget. The €581 million dedicated to primary and secondary school infrastructure is an important investment in the longer-term standard of Irish schools, and is welcomed by the Alliance.

However, for families on low incomes, the 1% levy will be a hit significant enough to topple some families below the poverty line. Over 230,000 children are at risk of poverty in Ireland, almost 1 in 4 – today's Budget is set to increase this figure. There is no hiding place from the 1% levy.

We reject Minister's Lenihan's suggestion that universal entitlements fail to target those in greatest need. Universal Child Benefit is about equity and how society values children. Its taxation will not save money for Minister Lenihan. The Commission for Taxation will find that the administrative costs of making complementary changes will outweigh any saving.

Cuts to the Child Benefit payment to young people, who have passed the cut off age of 18 years, but are in full time education and remain dependent on their families, is a significant step backwards. It shows a lack of appreciation for the vulnerability of young people at this stage in their life – it is in all our future interests that young people are encouraged to continue in further education. The withdrawal of this payment will disproportionately impact on children in poorer households where the incentive will be to find a job rather than remain in education.

In addition, as a member of the Equality Rights Alliance, we are deeply concerned by the drastic budget cuts to the Equality Authority and the Irish Human Rights Commission. These bodies are central to the framework we have established to protect and promote human rights, including the human rights of children. While we acknowledge the legitimate cost saving objective in the decision to integrate the administrative functions of both offices, we are gravely concerned that the budget cuts will dilute work programmes and compromise the scrutiny and promotion functions of these respective bodies. This decision is flawed and we strongly urge that it be re-examined.

Read the small print: is this Budget about cutting children out of a future?"

Jillian van Turnhout
Chief Executive

V. APPENDIX I – List of Alliance Member Organisations

Amnesty International	Irish National Teachers Organisation
Ana Liffey Children’s Project	Irish Penal Reform Trust
The Ark, a cultural centre for children	Irish Refugee Council
Association for Criminal Justice Research & Development Ltd	Irish Traveller Movement
Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland	Irish Youth Foundation
ATD Fourth World	ISPC
Barnardos	Jack & Jill Children’s Foundation
Barretstown	Jesuit Centre for Faith & Justice
Border Counties Childcare Network	Junglebox FDYS
CARI	Kids’ Own Publishing Partnership
Catholic Guides of Ireland	Kilbarrack Youth Project
Catholic Youth Care	La Leche League of Ireland
Childminding Ireland	Lifestart National Office
Children in Hospital Ireland	Mary Immaculate College
City of Dublin YMCA	Matt Talbot Community Trust
CityArts	Miss Carr’s Children’s Home
Crosscare Aftercare Unit	Mothers Union
Crosscare Drug Awareness Programme	Mounttown Neighbourhood Youth Project
DIT –School of Social Sciences & Legal Studies	National Association for Parent Support
Dublin Rape Crisis Centre	National Children’s Nurseries Association
Dun Laoghaire Refugee Project	National Parents Council (Post-Primary)
Educate Together	National Parents Council (Primary)
Education Department UCD	National Youth Council of Ireland
Enable Ireland	National Organisation for the Treatment of Abusers (NOTA)
Focus Ireland	O.P.E.N.
Forbairt Naíonraí Teo	One Family
Foróige	One in Four
Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN)	Parentline
Home Start National Office Ireland	Pavee Point
Hope Voluntary Housing Association	Peter McVerry Trust
IAYPIC	PLANET
Inclusion Ireland	Psychological Society of Ireland
Integrating Ireland	SAOL Project – SAOL Beag Children’s Centre
International Adoption Association	Society of St. Vincent de Paul
IPPA, the Early Childhood Organisation	SPARK (Support Project for Adolescent Refugee Kids)
Irish Autism Action	St. Nicholas Montessori College
Irish Association of Hospital Play Staff	St. Nicholas Montessori Society
Irish Association of Social Workers	Step by Step Child & Family Project
Irish Association of Suicidology	Sugradh
Irish Centre for Human Rights, Galway	Teen Counselling
Irish Congress of Trade Unions	Treoir
Irish Council for Civil Liberties	UNICEF Ireland
Irish Foster Care Association	Youth Initiative in Partnership
Irish Girl Guides	Youth Work Ireland
Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed	