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OneFamilyIreland



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## One Family – Ten Solutions – Smarter Futures Response to Budget 2012 Cuts on One-Parent Families

### Background:

**Fact:** the most economically deprived families in Ireland are one-parent families

**Fact:** a disproportionate number of the poorest children in Ireland live in one-parent families

**Fact:** most lone parents on social welfare are trying to get into jobs that will take their families out of poverty

**Fact:** out of school childcare services are not available or affordable

**Fact:** in Budget 2011 a lone parent lost 5% of their income whereas a high earning married couple lost 1.3%

**Fact:** lone parent families were one of the worst hit groups financially by Budget 2012

**Budget 2012** saw severe cuts impacting on lone parents who are on social welfare or in low paid insecure jobs at the same time as they will be required to move onto Jobseeker's Allowance when their youngest child is seven. There is little scope for additional expenditure. However, many lone parents will not successfully get out of poverty and into sustainable employment without supports to overcome the barriers in their lives. Many require education, training, job experience, childcare and parenting supports, because parenting on your own is an extraordinarily difficult thing to do.

Our **Ten Solutions** are all about delivering some of the supports needed to enable lone parents to have **Smarter Futures** – to help them out of poverty, off social assistance and into quality, sustainable jobs. These solutions may not require a lot of money but they do require public services and policy makers to think and behave creatively so that we can deliver more appropriate and effective services. To enable some of the poorest children in Ireland have a better life, please help champion and advocate for these **Ten Solutions for Smarter Futures for Lone Parents:**

1. **Flexibilities** Lone parents who transition to Jobseeker's Allowance should not be required to be available for fulltime work but rather for 15 hours per week during school hours. This should mitigate many of the child protection concerns that have arisen around seven year olds being left on their own. A series of flexibilities or exemptions are required, such as those that already exist in the UK and many other countries, allowing for a parent who has a lack of childcare, lack of transport, a child with a disability, or for someone experiencing separation or bereavement, etc.

One Family is working to ensure a positive and equal future for all members of all one-parent families in Ireland – changing attitudes, services, policies and lives. Together with one-parent families and those working with them, we are committed to achieving equality and respect for all families.



2. **Wrap around childcare** to include before school starts and after school care. The childcare needs to be local, so that parents can access it. One value for money solution to providing the necessary funding for childcare, would be to realign the Community Employment Scheme, so that CE workers help to deliver such a service. The attendant service and skill development would support best practice. Engagement of the Depart. of Education & Skills is critical for successful delivery.
3. **Specialised bridging/skill development programmes** for lone parents that account for their complex family situations and provide holistic support, raising skills and aspirations by empowering participants to overcome the barriers that prevent them from fully participating in work, education and/or skill development, with an overall goal of improving the lives of those parenting alone. There is more information on One Family's *New Futures* and other Welfare to Work programmes at [www.onefamily.ie](http://www.onefamily.ie)
4. **Special advisors** in SOLAS and local social welfare offices who have an expanded brief and who are upskilled in working with lone parents, are critical to success. Engagement with lone parents should start at point of sign up for the One-Parent Family Payment and should continue. This approach is recognised by the NEES management group.
5. **Education and training** development and promotion of a wide range of part-time, modular education and training from SOLAS, VEC, universities and Colleges of Further Education. Programmes need to facilitate people with parenting responsibilities in terms of start and finish times, etc.
6. **Progression opportunities** Ensure equality of opportunities for lone parents in the work place. Permit One-Parent Family Payment recipients to participate in all internship programmes. Support the promotion and upskilling of lone parents into management.
7. **Review the income disregard** Consider the conversion of the income disregard to a tax credit; with further consideration given to the use of tax credits to promote work, education and training. Work must pay in order for activation to work successfully.
8. **Work/life balance** Employers need to support flexibilities to enable parents to participate successfully in the workplace. Engagement is needed with employers to deliver flexible working for parents of young children, sick children and to allow for obligatory parental leave, paternal leave, term time working, etc.
9. **Interdepartmental working** and outcome-focused budgets to build on recommendations from the *Government Discussion Paper: Proposals for Supporting Lone Parents* and current quarterly meetings between Depart. of Social Protection and Depart. of Children & Youth Affairs. Operational dialogue to be opened up through a joint services working group that should include high level representatives from Depart. of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation and Depart. of Education & Skills.
10. **Monitoring, evaluation and poverty proofing** of activation of clients to ensure objectives are being met and that challenges can be addressed in a timely way. **Ends**

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