



CER Water Charges Plan Consultation

**Water: pricing,
allowances and
shared parenting**

About One Family

One Family, founded in 1972 as Cherish, offers support, information and services to all members of all one-parent families; those sharing parenting; those families going through a transition; to those experiencing an unplanned pregnancy and to those working with families. One Family believes in an Ireland where every family is cherished equally, and enjoys the social, financial and legal equality to create their own positive future.

One Family is Ireland's only support organisation for one-parent families and those sharing parenting. One Family believes that all children have a right to a happy family life so we help people parenting on their own and sharing parenting of their children to create strong families, often in difficult circumstances.

We do two main things - we offer specialist family support services to families and we campaign to improve the lives of one-parent families and those sharing parenting. The services we offer include the national askonefamily lo-call helpline, skill development programmes to help parents move off welfare and back into work and/or education, parenting programmes, support for those experiencing a crisis pregnancy, and counselling services – all to help people who parent alone or are sharing parenting to get better jobs, be confident parents and have happier children.

We believe that children do best when they have positive relationships with their parents and other adults in their lives. Whatever a family's form, it is the quality of the relationships that matter, not the legal structure of the family. We are also working for the constitution to be expanded to give rights and protection to all family forms. At the moment it only recognises the family based on marriage.

We also work for other social changes. As the families we represent are four times more likely to live in poverty than others, we want affordable childcare and education, so that parents get the opportunity to get better jobs and decent salaries.

Sharing Parenting - A significant number of children whose parents are not married; are separated and/or divorced are raised by their mothers alone. However, it is important for children to know that they have two parents and to know who their parents are. Fathers, as well as mothers, are very special to their children and it is important for children that, where possible, both parents take a positive parenting role in the lives of their children and exercise their responsibilities to their children. Just because a relationship between parents is over should not mean that one parent disappears out of the child's life or mind.

- Shared parenting gives children the possibility of a nurturing relationship with both parents and their extended families.
- It reassures children that they have two parents, and although they live in separate places, the children have a home with each of them.
- One parent is not unfairly burdened with the responsibility of discipline whilst the other becomes merely the fun or contact parent.

Shared parenting can work well if it is child- focused, rather than adult-focused. The essential element is the goodwill and determination of the parents to make it work.

Shared parenting, Irish Water and water charges and allowances

The proposed children(s) allowance(s) and charging suggests that these allowance(s) are allocated to the recipient of the children's allowance which is provided for by the Department of Social Protection. This, in effect, in most cases is the mother. Therefore, Irish Water the allocation of allowances MUST accept the dynamics of the Irish modern family and reflect that children may spend significant time in the separate homes of their mothers and fathers.

About One-Parent and Shared-Parenting Families in Ireland

- 1 in 8 people in Ireland live in a one-parent family (Census 2011)
- 1 in 4 families with children in Ireland is a one-parent family (Census 2011)
- Over half a million people live in one-parent families in Ireland (Census 2011)
- 13.5 per cent of one-parent families are headed by a father (Census 2011)
- Almost 1 in 5 children (18.3%) live in a one-parent family (Census 2011)
- There are over 215,000 one-parent families in Ireland today – 25.8 per cent of all families with children (Census 2011)
- People in lone parent households tend to have the lowest disposable income out of all households in the state (EU-SILC 2010)
- Those living in lone parent households continue to experience the highest rates of deprivation with almost 69% of individuals from these households experiencing one or more forms of deprivation (EU-SILC 2010)
- OFP recipients more than twice (16.9%) at risk of 'consistent poverty' than the population (6.9%) as a whole

Parenting Plan - A parenting plan is a way of sorting out parenting arrangements. A parenting plan sets out how to share time with the children, how to manage responsibilities, and how to make decisions about the children. School arrangements, childcare, holidays, pocket money can all be part of a parenting plan. Times can be arranged for telephone calls, discussions around money or childrearing, strategies for dealing with differences of opinion if they arise.

A parenting plan:

- provides continuity and predictability for children in their relationship with each parent.
- means the children will know when they will be with each of you.
- provides a structure so everyone is clear about future living arrangements.
- helps to reduce conflict

A written plan works best. It makes for clarity and certainty while allowing parents to write into it provisions for flexibility and dealing with the unexpected.

Recommendation

Just and fair recognition **MUST** be given to the dynamics of Irish modern families when allocating allowances associated with children's consumption of water and that a significant number of children will spend equally as much time in the home of their father and mother.

Example of a Shared Parenting Agreement

Principle

We accept the principle and practice of shared parenting.

1. We, (Mother's first and last name) and (Father's first and last name), the parents of (full name(s) of child(ren) enter into this Shared Parenting Agreement in order to better meet our parental responsibilities and to safeguard our child(ren)'s future development.
2. We both recognise that our child(ren) wish to love and respect both of us, regardless of our marital status or our place of residence, and that the welfare of our child(ren) can best be served by our mutual cooperation as parents in shared parenting, and by each of us providing a home in which they are cared for and to which they belong.
3. We also jointly recognise that court proceedings regarding child(ren) and custody and access matters can be detrimental to child(ren), and we therefore have decided to resolve these questions ourselves, using a Shared Parenting Agreement.
4. We have chosen to avoid the traditional terminology surrounding divorce and child(ren) by using terms that more accurately describe the reorganisation of our former family to new homes or dual households.
5. Terminology: In order to reaffirm our commitment of raising our child(ren) in a dual-household status, we choose to use the terms "live with mother" and "live with father" in describing our arrangement, rather than in terms of custody/primary and non-custodial/access as may be defined in other legal documents."

Signed _____

Mother

Witness _____

Signed _____

Father

Date: _____