

SOLUTIONS

FOR SMARTER FUTURES



#10solutions

www.onefamily.ie

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 working to ensure a positive and sustainable future for all members of one-parent families in Ireland – focusing on 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. In addition to striving for fundamental structural change, we support individual one-parent families as they parent through times of family, work and life change. We know that every family is unique, and so we work in a family centred way to bring about better lives for parents and children.

Who are the lone parents in Ireland

Evidence informed research has suggested strong predictors of lone parenthood - growing up in a low socio-economic environment; having low educational attainment; and experiencing low levels of employment. However, despite common perceptions of those parenting alone as being young, low-educated women, recent reviews highlighted that over 33% of those parenting alone were as a result of a 'broken marriage' in later life, with another 10% parenting alone as a result of losing their partner through death. Furthermore, the review showed a significant number of

those parenting alone in their twenties were entering into relationships later in life. These two points highlight the transitional nature, not just of lone parent families, but the new dynamic family forms that have emerged across Ireland and the OECD. With regards to men parenting alone, they account for approximately 10% with most of those becoming lone parents later in life following a relationship break-up or the death of their partner. (ESRI, 2009ⁱ)

The most recent research shows that people living in one parent households are four times more likely to live in consistent poverty with half of all lone parent families suffering from material deprivation, meaning they continue to experience the highest levels of deprivation in the state (EU-SILC, 2010ⁱⁱ). Children of lone parents suffer as a consequence. 65% of all children living in consistent poverty in Ireland in 2007 were living in lone parent households (ESRI, 2010ⁱⁱⁱ) with the number of children living in one parent households in Ireland is roughly one in five a figure that is expected to raise both in Ireland and across the OECD (OECD, 2011^{iv}). The financial burden is heavier still for those lone parents caring for children with a disability, which according to the most recent census data was over 14,000 (CSO, 2006^v).

Social exclusion continues to be a big issue for those parenting alone. A survey from 2011 on attitudes to family formation found that single-mothers had the highest levels of loneliness and the lowest levels of life satisfaction of those interviewed (FSA, 2011^{vi}). This is backed up from international research that has found elevated levels of common mental disorders (anxiety, depression, etc.) among single mothers, specifically those experiencing economic deprivation (Hope et al., 1999^{vii}). Taken in tandem with the most recent figures from Eurostats which showed that 63% of single parent households in Ireland were at risk of poverty and social exclusion, second only to Lithuania underscores how much work is to be done and how detrimental Budget 2012 will prove to be for those parenting alone in Ireland.

Critical success factors of Welfare to Work Policy and Practice

The critical success factors for lone parents from the UK (despite what is happening to the delivery of support service in the UK) and a variety of both Nordic and US welfare to work programmes can be summarised as delivering:

1. Creative front-end intake procedures (comprehensive needs assessment) that serves to engage and connect participants to the programme (personal development and SMART goals);
2. Tailored learning and development programmes to address barriers;
3. Strong case management providing individualised attention to participants and their problems; and
4. Job and education options development, defined as the ability to establish strong relationships with employers, education and skill development providers.¹

Pivotal to this (particularly in the UK) has been the role of the personal adviser service which is a package of advice and support, tailored to meet the needs of each lone parent. This includes providing advice on job vacancies; pre and in-work benefits; incentives; childcare; training to update skills; guiding the lone parent in the process of finding work and providing an in-work support service to help them make the transition from benefit into employment. Because of their

¹ Millar, J., 2010. Lone mothers, poverty and paid work in the UK. In: Chant, S., ed. *The International Handbook Of Gender And Poverty: Concepts, Research and Policy*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar

personal circumstances, lone parents are likely to face additional barriers to entering work. [New Deal revised operational guidelines, 2008]

Premise?

1. Social protection is a social and economic necessity.
2. Social protection is a factor in alleviating poverty, in helping cope with risks, and in adapting to changing economic, political, demographic and societal circumstances.
3. Social security has a pivotal role in delivering income equality.

Our vision is to make a poverty-free and more socially secure and cohesive Ireland possible by 2020. Social protection policy overall is universalistic, but in practice tailoring needs to make universalism effective involves fine-tuning. One Family offers 10 simple and effective [Solut1Ons](#) for Budget 2014 that ensure our social programmes and practices deliver.

Everyone has a role to play in building a poverty-free and more socially secure Ireland – all levels of government, businesses of all sizes and types, community and civil society organisations and individuals. But the biggest role is the Government’s decision on how the state will spend its money. Our submission aims to underscore the need for government to establish clear short, medium and long-term goals that outline how their budgetary decisions will secure a poverty-free and socially secure Ireland, particularly; but also not specifically for those parenting alone.

Our budget submission for 2014 has three overarching goals:

Adopt comprehensive and integrated area-based planning for poverty elimination:

Linked to and in support of current and future poverty action plans, an area-based plan for poverty elimination will provide a blueprint for reducing and eventually eliminating poverty. The plan will inspire other efforts to combat poverty and to promote a fair and just society.

Set regional SMART goals to eliminate poverty, promote social inclusion and strengthen social security:

Inspired by similar legislative and policy efforts in other jurisdictions, regional SMART goals will ensure a transparent and accountable record of ongoing progress, clearly showing where responsibility and praise lies for progress with social development while demonstrating a lasting institutional commitment to leadership.

Enable sufficient revenue to invest in social security:

In order to fulfil its role and responsibility to ensure social security generally, and to combat poverty specifically, the government must have sufficient revenue, or “fiscal capacity.” Ten Solut1Ons will help to promote public understanding of the link between the taxes we pay and the supports and services we benefit from.



ONE Flexibilities

Enabling long-term direct savings: Flexibilities or Jobseeker Transition will help those parents who have a child with a disability, or lack of access to childcare or who are coping with a bereavement or separation. However, while recognising the positive step in introducing the Jobseekers Transition and the introduction of the pilot programme for after-school care, we recommend that if a parent on OPFP comes off the payment early because they have secured employment, these parents should receive after-school care and childcare support. A second recommendation is that the Jobseekers Transition payment extends to new applicants not previously in receipt of OPFP, recognising they face the same problems accessing affordable childcare as those who presently qualify for this payment. We cannot expect one lone parent to be available for full-time work and another not, when their children are of the same age, and need the same level of care.

| Action for 2013-14 | Impact |
|---|--|
| As a long-term cost saving and incentive to engage in work, permit lone parents who come off OPFP early to access after-school care and childcare support | Lone parents become net contributors through sustained employment |
| Extend Jobseekers Transition to new applicants, recognising their circumstance is of equal need | The problem arising of lone parents failing to take up full-time employment because of a lack of affordable childcare and afterschool care is pre-empted |



TWO Wrap-around Childcare

Provision of childcare, both before and after-school care is an economic driver. A value-for-money and quality assured childcare service can be delivered by realigning practitioner training to ensure an accredited practice-led workforce development programme. This will enable access to quality, accessible and affordable childcare at local levels and ensure that lone parents are able to take up opportunities of employment.

A further consideration for the provision of affordable childcare is to expand and adapt the one parent family tax credit to cover childcare and afterschool care costs. A well designed tax credit system can provide the targeted support needed to help lone parents secure the employment opportunities that would lead to financial independence.

| Action for 2013-14 | Impact |
|---|---|
| Realign practitioner training to ensure an accredited, practice-led workforce | Supports workforce development and enables quality, accessible and affordable child and out-of-school care system |
| Expand and adapt the one parent family tax credit to cover childcare and afterschool care costs | Greater take up of employment by lone parents, resulting in less costs incurred by the Department |



THREE Bridging Programmes

Everyone’s situation is different and some people need a little more help than others. Bridging programmes for lone parents help them to overcome the barriers that prevent their access to full-time work and further educational opportunities.

| Action for 2013 | Impact |
|--|---|
| Mainstream and promote access to personal and career skill development, at least 18 months before activation for lone parents who are moving to JA or other payments | Enable activation of lone parents to achieve their potential for both themselves and their family |



FOUR Expert Guidance

Support and guidance is crucial for successfully moving from welfare into work-life. Specially trained experts who understand the challenges faced by lone parents need to be on hand to help them to achieve their goals and secure financial independence for them and their families.

| Action for 2013 | Impact |
|---|--|
| Ensure that lone parents who are transitioning from OPFP to JA, or other payments, have a constructive, responsive and action planned career development assessment | Ensures lone parents are not resigned to life on welfare but helped to achieve their potential |



FIVE Responsive Learning

Further education and training opportunities have to complement parenting responsibilities not compete with them. Institutions need to develop a wide range of part-time, modular education and training programmes that support the activation efforts of lone parents with children of school going age.

| Action for 2013 | Impact |
|---|--|
| Ensure that an appropriate variety of FETAC accredited skill development, training and education programmes through the ETBs are accessible and delivered part-time (10am-1pm) when children are at school | Increases participation in skill development and delivers sustainable opportunities for lone parents |



SIX Progression Opportunities

Warrant? equal chances for lone parents to build sustainable and fulfilling careers enabling them to participate in upskilling programmes. All labour market activation and workforce development programmes must be open to lone parents as equal and valuable members of our economy.

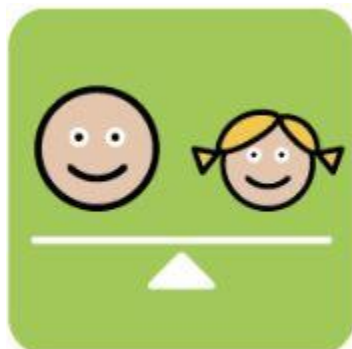
| Action for 2013 | Impact |
|---|--|
| Facilitate and enable lone parents access and participation in Momentum programmes recognising that lone parents may need additional supports to participate in STEM initiatives and career progression opportunities | Grows pathways to future skills and economic independence for lone parents in the evolving economy |



SEVEN Income Security

Work must pay. Develop and promote an active range of in-work assistance through the tax regime. The real challenge is to make childcare affordable for those at the bottom end of the income range, so that there are strong incentives for second earners and single parents. That would do much more to help reduce child poverty, and it would help economic recovery too.

| Action for 2013-14 | Impact |
|--|--|
| FIS and the income disregard should be combined into a tapered and tailored in-work tax credit which is not based on an annual assessment or a threshold, but through a real time assessment process | Enables an active and progressive social and economic assistance system that alleviates poverty and prevents poverty-traps |



EIGHT Work-life Balance

Engage with employers. We need to enable lone parents to participate successfully in the workplace through delivering flexi-security for parents of young children, sick children and facilitate obligatory parental leave, paternal leave and term-time working. These are corner stones of social responsibility and political economic assets.?

| Action for 2013-14 | Impact |
|--|---|
| Mandate for flexibility in the labour market combined with social protection and an active labour market policy respecting parental responsibilities | Designed and implemented across four policy components it will deliver: 1) flexible and reliable contractual arrangements 2) comprehensive lifelong learning opportunities 3) effective active labour market policies 4) modern social security systems providing adequate income support during employment |



NINE Joined-up Delivery

Build on the Social Investment Package through the delivery of area-based outcome focused budgets which mandate and deliver: integrated solutions to child and family poverty; access to quality affordable housing; and tailored family support services that enact change, generate development and create a positive impact on reducing consistent and persistent poverty. Any increase in child poverty will cost society more in the long run.

| Action for 2013 | Impact |
|--|---|
| Commit to outcome-based budgeting to deliver new ways on how government works for people in order to reduce and ultimately eradicate child poverty | Tailored area-based solutions ensures value-for-money and more sustainable child poverty policies and practices |



TEN

Poverty and Parent Proofing

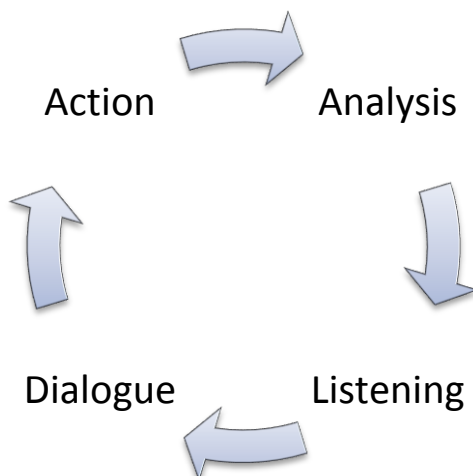
Monitoring and evaluating the activation process and management of lone parents needs direct and supportive engagement which can be partly achieved through a Poverty Impact Assessment carried out before the introduction of new policies, then the estimated effect on poverty levels can be factored into other cost-benefit analysis and support preventative spend action to taken by government corporately and help to lessen the impact on the most vulnerable families.

| Action for 2013 | Impact |
|--|---|
| Establish and promote mandatory Poverty Impact Assessments for all policies affecting families and in particular those parenting alone | Delivers a clear and easily understood rationale why specific decisions are made and requires alleviating actions to be identified and acted upon |

Creating Impetus

Our Pre-budget submission for 2014 provides an overview of what an area based poverty strategy looks like to support and drive down, in particular child poverty rates in Ireland. It sews? and lays the groundwork?, posing the question ‘When groups and organisations set about to reduce poverty in their community, what concrete actions can they actually take to achieve that result?’

One Family has outlined some information about the philosophies which guide poverty reduction work, the principles, and their processes for adding value. But mostly it is about what we all actually do to reduce poverty. Whilst we have directed focus primarily at multi-sectoral collaborations with a mandate to reduce poverty, it is not intended to diminish the role of government in achieving that mandate. The role of government is paramount. Governments are the primary funders of poverty reduction work. Governments create a policy context that has much larger impacts than programmatic interventions do and the policies can either work with or against the programmatic efforts. Governments serve as leaders and enablers of the efforts to reduce poverty. Therefore, our model of budget development and engagement requires a different approach: one in which the model is much better at illustrating the circular nature of collaboration in action and reflection AT ALL STAGES, as illustrated below and in the framework detailed:



Redesigning the way government builds its budget and makes social investment decisions is an imperative. The design needs to move to an outcome-based budget that helps to make public resources last, and aids decision makers in prioritising public and social investments that align with the services and supports that people, families and communities have told Government what they need to achieve economic independence.

Putting this new budgeting system in place requires the State to set clear budget performance outcomes, expectations and criteria. The Department of Social Protection’s budget is a key mechanism in delivering social investment. To build transparency and accountability, the Department’s budgets need to be reviewed by an independent team of scrutineers, who can undertake an Poverty Impact Assessment, so that a preventative spend can be structured to ameliorate and severe impacts on disadvantaged people families and/or communities in Ireland.

Finally, all budgetary data must be analysed to ensure public and social investments are focused and tied to outcomes.

Summary: Solutions for an Anti-Poverty Strategy and Budget 2014

- **Monitoring and recording:** We must monitor and record the impact of poverty at community level. The first step in tackling poverty is to know where it arises and in what forms (for example, lone parents, low waged).
- **Community participation:** We must encourage community participation by establishing structures to enable the voice of certain groups to be heard, such as those parenting alone and families in transition
- **Community-based approaches:** Policy initiatives should challenge the 'trickle down' philosophy underpinning large scale projects. These are often at the expense of community-based approaches and do nothing to address the isolation and lack of power experienced by people in poverty and in particular lone-parents
- **Integration into mainstream programmes:** Anti-poverty action should be integral to mainstream programmes. Many initiatives have been marginalised in the past.
- **Recognition of limitations:** We must recognise the limitations on what we can achieve whilst maximising existing possibilities.
- **Role of employers:** employers, particularly the public and independent sectors, should try to set good practice 'benchmarks' in their local economies. Wage rates, conditions of employment and equal opportunities should be addressed by anti-poverty strategies.
- **Budgets:** Anti-poverty strategies are unlikely to survive without corporate budgets to support them.
- **The budgetary process:** Information on budgets should be made more accessible and we should open up the budgetary process to allow understanding and evaluation of the distributional effects of policy. Anti-poverty strategies should attempt to progressively target services to areas of greatest deprivation.
- **Partnerships:** we should develop partnerships with local communities and other agencies to help address poverty.
- **Marketing:** We should actively promote services to specific groups such as those parenting alone and families in transition and areas in poverty.

ⁱ Lunn, P., Fahey, T., & Hannan, C. (2009), *Family Figures: Family Dynamics & Family Types in Ireland 1986-2006*, Dublin: The Economic & Social Research Institute

ⁱⁱ EU Survey on Income & Living Conditions – Preliminary Results 2010. Available online at http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/silc/2010/prelimsilc_2010.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Russell, H., Maitre, B., & Nolan, B. (2010) *Monitoring Poverty Trends in Ireland 2004-2007: Key Issues for Children, People of Working Age and Older People*, Dublin: ESRI & UCD

^{iv} OECD (2011), *The Future of Families to 2030*, OECD Publishing

^v Census 2006, Dublin: CSO

^{vi} Fine-Davis, M. (2011) *Attitudes to Family Formation in Ireland: Findings from the Nationwide Study*, Dublin: TCD

^{vii} Hope, S. Power, C., & Rodgers, B. (1999) *Does Financial Hardship Account for Elevated Psychological Distress Among Lone Mothers?*, in *Social Science in Medicine*; 49: pp. 1637-1649