

The Prevention and Early Intervention Network

2024 Pre-Budget
Submission



Prevention & Early
Intervention Network

Promoting positive outcomes for children,
families & communities

OUR VISION

The Prevention and Early Intervention Network (PEIN) represents organisations and individuals working in children, family and community services throughout Ireland who are committed to developing a prevention and early intervention-led approach to service planning and delivery. PEIN focuses on the most effective ways of building a protective layer of support to stop difficulties from arising in the first place and providing support at the earliest possible stage when they do occur.

PEIN's vision is that every child in Ireland is supported to be the best that they can be, through the provision of timely, appropriate and integrated information, advice and services that are planned and delivered prioritising prevention and early intervention. The availability and commitment of up-front resources is fundamental to making this vision a reality, and will result in long-term savings for the exchequer.

IN RESPONSE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S SUMMER ECONOMIC STATEMENT PEIN:



- Welcomes the announcement of a budgetary package of approximately €6.4 billion and strongly advocates that a percentage of the additional €5.25bn in core spending is ringfenced for prevention and early intervention.
- Asks that the budgetary strategy of '*minimising the possibility of transient revenues being used to finance permanent commitments*' is achieved through the discontinuation of State reliance on philanthropic money to fund core services delivered by Community and Voluntary organisations, often on behalf of the statutory sector.
- Issues our Pre-Budget 2024 Submission on behalf of PEIN members.

EARLY YEARS

High quality, accessible Early Childhood Care and Education is key to the achievement of better child outcomes.

BUDGET 2024 NEEDS TO:

- Further develop the 2022 Pay Agreement for the Early Years sector by professionalising the pay and conditions of practitioners and scaling remuneration according to experience.
- Budget for an increased allocation to support the implementation of the Equal Participation Model.
- Fund research into the development and implementation of an evidence-based model of mentoring and coaching and quality improvement for Early Years services across communities and the sector as a whole.
- Increase overall investment in Early Years to 1% of national income by 2030, in line with UNICEF target and the OECD average.



PARENTING & FAMILY SUPPORT

Supporting parents and families means supporting children and their development over the life course.

BUDGET 2024 NEEDS TO:

- Allocate €50m per year in multiannual funding to scale up and expand early childhood home visiting programmes to mitigate child poverty, developmental delays, educational disadvantage, domestic violence, parental isolation, trauma and poor mental health, as part of the implementation of *Supporting Families: National Model of Parenting Support Services* and the development of a national approach to home visiting as part of First 5.
- Ringfence multiannual funding for the effective and full implementation of *Supporting Families: National Model of Parenting Support Services*.
- Allocate funding for the development of an interdepartmental strategy to provide a comprehensive response to the needs, and ensure the appropriate entitlements, of kinship care families.
- Provide a specific budgetary allocation to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, to ensure that financial support is available to relatives who take on the care of a child or young person, who would otherwise be in State care, placing them on a par with foster carers.



VULNERABLE GROUPS

Budget 2024 needs to provide a protective layer for the most vulnerable in our society.

BUDGET 2024 NEEDS TO:

- **Children:** Increase funding to Tusla for child protection and social provision for children (PEIN echoes the ask of €46.7m calculated by Social Justice Ireland).
- **Homes where there is parental problem alcohol use:** In order to safeguard children's rights and ensure their protection, the national Hidden Harm framework requires momentum and urgency. PEIN echoes the call from Alcohol Action Ireland: An updated action plan must be developed with clear targets, timeframes, and funding, and be publicly available and promoted.
- **Travellers:** Establish, as priority, the Traveller Accommodation Authority to oversee national delivery with full staffing requirement, to redress supply, chronic overcrowding and inadequate accommodation.
- **Those seeking International Protection:** Invest in vulnerability assessments, as outlined in A White Paper to End Direct Provision and to *Establish a New International Protection Support Service*, so that support plans can be put in place for parents and families.
- **Lone parents:** Decouple Child Maintenance from social protection payments, so that it can be treated as a non-means-tested, non-taxable income for children, as with Child Benefit, to support one parent families out of poverty.
- **Those at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness:** Allocate funding to pilot Housing First for families who have additional support needs in order to reduce the time spent in emergency accommodation.



HEALTH

Current waiting lists for children's mental and physical health services are narrowing the critical window for prevention and early intervention.

BUDGET 2024 NEEDS TO:

- Revise the income thresholds for the Medical Card, to ensure that all families with children at risk of poverty will have access to a full card. At a minimum, these should be set above the poverty thresholds.
- Ringfence funding to reduce and ultimately remove waiting lists and to develop a triage system for children currently on those waiting lists. This would mean prioritising according to need and, where appropriate, referring to alternative or interim supports.
- Invest in the transformation of the health service in line with *Sláintecare* by planning for sustained investment in General Practice, Primary Care and community-based care, in conjunction with the implementation of the Regional Health Areas.
- Invest €35m in the implementation of *Sharing the Vision* mental health policy.



DISABILITIES

Children should not have to wait excessive periods for services that are essential to their development.

BUDGET 2024 NEEDS TO:

- Resource disability teams so that every child can receive an assessment and the recommended therapeutic service(s) in a matter of weeks, rather than years.
- Repeat last year's €63m once-off inflation fund for Community and Voluntary disability organisations to address ongoing inflation pressures.
- Introduce a cost of disability payment of €20 per week (= €228m in Budget 2024).



CHILD POVERTY

More than 671,000 people are currently living in poverty in Ireland, of which 188,602 are children.

Budget 2024 is an opportunity to finally eradicate child poverty in Ireland:

- Ensure that the Child Poverty and Wellbeing Programme Office has dedicated staff to leverage the cross-departmental knowledge and expertise on the interconnected issues of child poverty (as called for by the Children's Rights Alliance).
- Adopt percentage targets aimed at reducing poverty and deprivation among particularly vulnerable groups such as children, lone parents, jobless households, and those in social housing.
- Increase core social welfare rates in line with the cost of living.



SUSTAINABLE PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION INFRASTRUCTURE

For every €1 invested in prevention and early intervention, the State's return on investment is between €4 and €7.

BUDGET 2024 NEEDS TO:

- Sustain the funding of current Area Based Childhood (ABC) programme sites and budget for phased expansion of the model to all communities experiencing disadvantage, as they are best placed to respond at the level of the child, family, and community adequately and appropriately.
- Frontload €50m funding into the Child Poverty and Wellbeing Programme Office in the Department of the Taoiseach in order to allow it to commence an ambitious programme to rapidly reduce and ultimately end the scourge of children poverty and disadvantage, including a strategic transition in policy and funding from crisis response to prevention and early intervention.
- Introduce percentage targets in each government department and state agency for the phased transition of expenditure in favour of prevention and early intervention strategies aimed at reducing child poverty and enhancing child wellbeing, commencing at 2% per year in Budget 2024.
- Move to a 3–5-year funding cycle, to provide continuity of planned and high quality supports to children and families.
- Place Community and Voluntary Agencies on a level playing field with their statutory partners in terms of pay and conditions, in order to ensure staff recruitment and retention and stability and continuity in their vital services to children and families.
- Consider ringfencing National Lottery funding and a strategic investment of a small percentage of the current exchequer excess for investment in prevention and early intervention programmes for children and families, leading to significant potential savings in a wider range of exchequer costs in the medium to long term.

