

Barnardos  Children's Budget 2014



**“SHE CAN'T PAY
FOR HEATING
BECAUSE SHE HAS
TO BUY FOOD.
SHE JUST TELLS ME
TO PUT ON
ANOTHER JUMPER.”**

Conor, aged 7.

September 2013

Children are growing up feeling hopeless and helpless. The impact of consecutive austerity budgets has put substantial pressure on their families. Parents are coping with overwhelming stress and anxiety and Barnardos is seeing increased levels of anxiety in children as well. Austerity is raising a generation of children who can't see hope in their future because they don't believe that their education will help them get jobs and live well in Ireland. The ongoing impact is damaging our society and will continue to do so long into the future.

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Grace's Story **9**



Paul, aged 15, lives with his mum and two younger sisters, and is in 3rd year in school.

“ I am always hungry as there is very little food in the house. Mum thinks I don't know but I have seen her switch tins of food between cupboards to make us think we have more food than we really do. I always see her take the smallest amount of food to give us the rest but even still I go to bed hungry. I can't remember the last time we had a fully cooked dinner as it's usually food from the freezer or chips from the takeaway. I never have breakfast so am always too hungry to pay attention in school. If I do have lunch it is just a bread and jam sandwich and bag of crisps. Some of the other boys call me chubby and I know that's from eating bad food but what can I do?

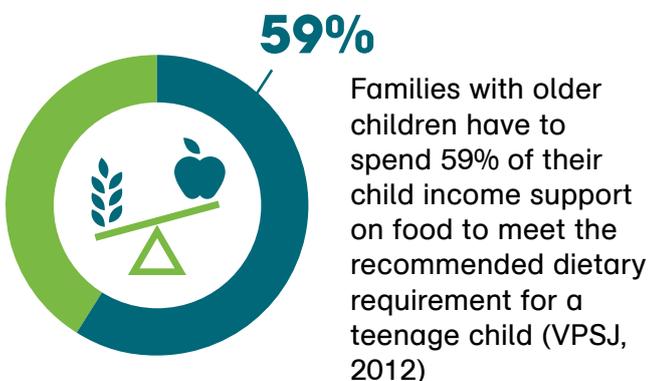
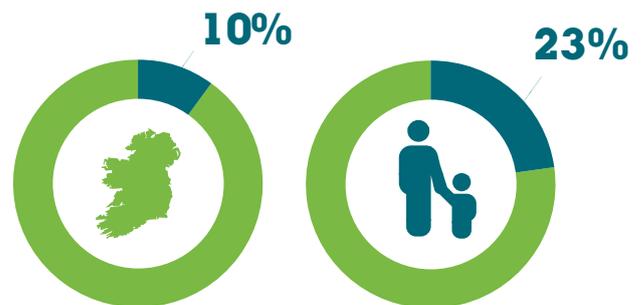
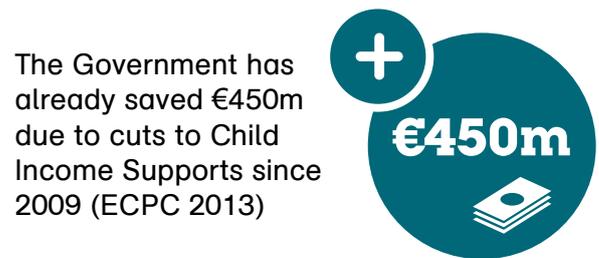
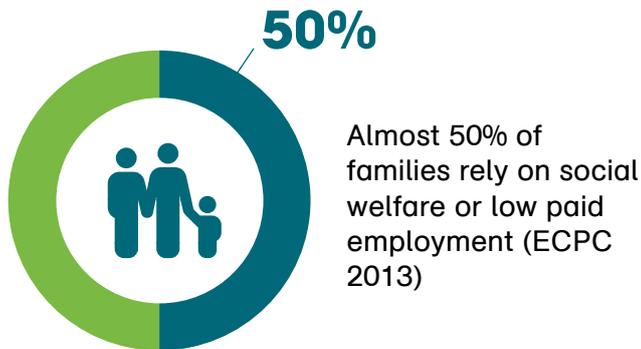
I can see the pressure on Mum to provide for us especially as she has to get all the medicines my sister needs for her diabetes. Mum often can't pay for some bills or borrows money from granny or moneylenders. I know at the end of the week, Mum has either no money or just a few cents. I would love to go to the football club or boxing club or even the cinema the odd time with my friends but don't even bother to ask because I know she doesn't have the money. I don't even have all my school books because they cost too much and I hate going to school because I know my teacher and others will pick on me.

Even my uniform hasn't been changed since I joined secondary school and I have grown lots since then.

I know that Mum has tried to go back to work but she has only been offered a few hours a week and she says it is not worth it if she has to pay for the bus and babysitters. I know there are other families like ours that are really struggling and I wish there was something that could be done. It's awful to see the strain on Mum and even though I know she is doing her best it's really bad that I don't get to do any normal teenage stuff because we can't afford it.

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Statistics



10% of the population are affected by food poverty but this rises to 23% for lone parent and unemployed households (DSP, 2012)

Barnardos' Policy Recommendations

- 1** Maintain Child Benefit and adult social welfare rates at current level;
- 2** Family Income Supplement must be retained in its current form to support those in low paid employment;
- 3** Raise the rates for the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance;
- 4** Retain the income disregard for One Parent Family Payment at its current level;
- 5** Maintain the budget for the School Meal Programme to address the food and nutrition needs of low income children.



**“I’D LIKE TO PLAY
FOOTBALL
BUT THERE’S RUBBISH
IN THE GARDEN
BECAUSE WE CAN’T
PAY THE BINMEN.”**

Conor, aged 7.

Conor, aged 7, lives with his parents and older brother and sister

“ I don’t like where I am living now because I have to share the bedroom with my older brother and sister. We moved here last year because my parents couldn’t pay the rent on the bigger house. I liked that house because we had a nice garden and I only had to share the bedroom with my brother. Now, I am not allowed out in the back garden as it is dirty with lots of rubbish in it because dad can’t pay the bin man to collect it. I have even seen rats running around it. I would like to go outside and play football there.

This house is always cold because the heating is never on, Mum says it’s broken but I know they haven’t paid the bills. I hear Mum and Dad arguing over money. I know she is using the money she has to buy food instead. She just tells me to put on another jumper but I am still cold and keep coughing. The cough won’t go away and I miss lots of school because it hurts when I cough lots.

When we moved here I couldn’t take all my toys because there is nowhere to put them and I miss my train set. My sister doesn’t like the house either because the landlord won’t fix the broken window in the bedroom so it’s windy even when she is in bed and there is nowhere for her to do her homework. She doesn’t like it as she has no friends here, the youth club has closed down and it is not safe to just hang around. Mum says that we should be getting a Council house soon but that it is taking ages.

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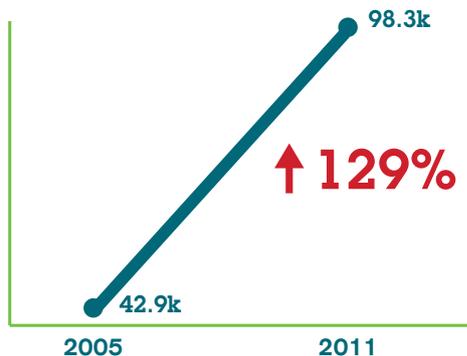
Statistics



of households are affected by fuel poverty (Dept of Communications, 2009)

1 in 4

people in Ireland report running out of money to pay ordinary bills or buy food in the past 12 months (NESC 2013)



The number of households on local authority waiting lists has increased by 129% between 2005 and 2011, and we estimate this figure has continued to grow



was cut from funding for youth programmes in the last Budget – leaving a budget of €51.4m in 2013

Barnardos' Policy Recommendations

- 1** Transfer administration of the Rent Supplement scheme to local authorities under the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government.
- 2** Protect Fuel Allowance and the Household Benefits Package
- 3** Expedite the roll out of the new €50 million three-year energy efficiency investment programme for local authority homes
- 4** Expedite the roll out of the Universal Health Insurance system and ensure that children will be among the first groups of beneficiaries.

**“THE WORST
WAS WHEN THEY
SHUT OFF
THE ELECTRICITY.”**

Helen, aged 11.



Helen is 11 years old, and lives with her parents and older brother

“ Ever since my Mam lost her job things have just been getting worse. My dad had to go down to part time hours in his job, and every time a bill comes in there’s another big fight. They don’t really think I can hear them but it upsets me when they shout at each other. I think about it all the time, how things used to be. We were a lot happier then. My brother even used to let me hang around with him. But now that he has dropped out of school, he’s always angry and he goes out whenever he can. He even stays out late sometimes and my Mam can’t even be bothered shouting at him.

It was worst when they shut the electricity off for a week. Nobody was shouting then but Mam stayed in bed and we could all hear her crying nearly all the time. It was horrible. Dad had to go down to the social welfare to ask for extra money to get them to switch it back on. He didn’t talk when he came back, just sat in front of the telly drinking beer. I didn’t know what to do to cheer him up.

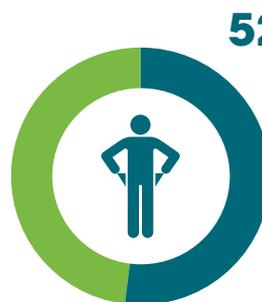
I don’t want to tell any of my friends because I don’t think that they’ll understand and I don’t want them to think my family’s weird or anything. I told them I had to go to my aunties last year when the school trip was on. I couldn’t ask Mam for the money. She’d just start crying again.

I don’t know what’s going to happen to us. I worry about my Mam especially. She used to laugh a lot. She really liked her job I think. She doesn’t like being home all the time. I don’t think it’s fair and it makes me angry. My teacher says you have to work hard in school and do well so you can get a job when you grow up. But it doesn’t make any difference anyway. I just want to get away from here. Everything is too hard. But I don’t think I will. I don’t know what’ll happen. ”

Statistics



Children living with a depressed mother have an increased likelihood of poor school attendance (ESRI, 2013).



52%

52% of households in consistent poverty were in arrears with at least one bill or loan (NESC, 2013)

Barnardos' Policy Recommendations

1 Relieve the budgetary pressure on those Departments whose spending is most relevant to children's lives. The Departments of Social Protection, Education and Skills and Children and Youth Affairs are critical to children. These budgets have already borne the brunt of the recession. Any further cuts to these already strained budgets will directly damage individual children's lives. The priority for Budget 2014 must be to protect these budgets to protect children.

2 In particular, ensure that the Child and Family Agency has sufficient budget to exercise its duties fully from the outset, including resources to deliver prevention and early intervention services.

3 Expedite the recruitment of professionals into the Community Mental Health Teams so waiting lists are reduced and supports offered to those in need.



**“THE TEACHERS
GIVE ME A HARD TIME
BECAUSE I DON’T HAVE
ALL THE BOOKS.”**

Grace, aged 13.

Grace is 13. She lives with her mother and two younger sisters and is in 2nd year in secondary school.

“ I’m not going back. I don’t care what anyone says. The woman from the Welfare Board doesn’t even come out that much. And I don’t think any of the teachers’ even notice I’m not there. Mum says I have to do well in school, she doesn’t want me to be poor when I’m older like her, but I don’t care. She doesn’t know what it’s like. I can’t read properly and even my younger sister who is only five is better than me at reading but she went to Montessori and I never did.

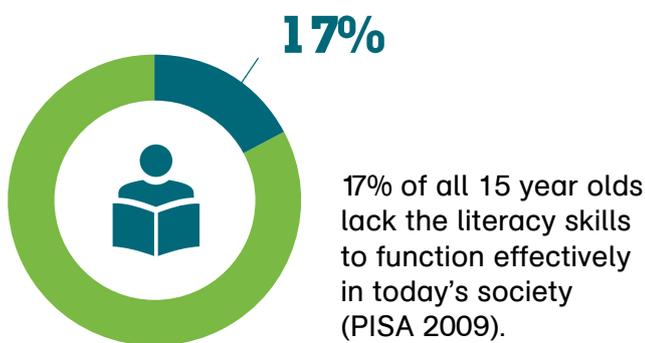
Everyone laughs at me in school because of my reading and my uniform being way too big and I have to tie a belt around the skirt to keep it up. And it’s already faded because it was second hand.

And some of the teachers were giving me a hard time because I didn’t have the books for their class. And I was always in trouble in those classes because I couldn’t do the homework. So Mum can say what she likes but it’s her fault that I can’t go in. Anyway, the other girls kept calling me stupid. I don’t want to be around them.

I didn’t really like my last school either but it was definitely better than the secondary. Mrs. Feeney helped me in class but she was helping load of the others so I didn’t feel like I was the only one.

I don’t think anyone in secondary cares about you. They only care that you have the right books and that your uniform is right. The Principal did give Mum a voucher for some of the books when she found out I didn’t have them but it wasn’t enough for all of them and then those teachers still gave out to me in front of everyone. I get grief everywhere, no matter what I do. I do feel upset about it. Some days it’s worse than others. Mum brought me to the GP a while ago and he wanted me to go and talk to someone but it never happened. Mum says it will, that I’m on a waiting list, but I don’t think it will. Nobody really cares about you.”

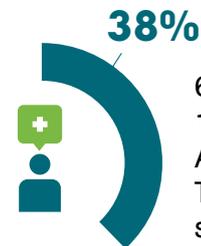
Statistics



51% of parents have to spend over €175 on their child's secondary school uniform (Barnardos Survey 2013)



Between Oct 2011-2012, there was a 17% increase in referrals to Community Adolescent Mental Health Teams. The average waiting time is three months but can be over a year.



63 of the recommended 107 Community Adolescent Mental Health Teams are in place but staffing is only at 38% of what is recommended (CAMHs 2012).

Barnardos' Policy Recommendations

- 1** Introduce a mandatory school book rental scheme across all schools to ensure that all children have access to the books they need at minimal cost to parents.
- 2** Force schools to review their uniform policy to reduce items requiring school crests or choosing plain coloured uniforms.
- 3** Introduce multi-annual investment plan for affordable, quality childcare and afterschool care. Access to such services has proven to benefit children's educational performance as well as their social and emotional development.
- 4** Increase investment in child and adolescent mental health services and examine reforming these services to reduce waiting times for children and young people in need.



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