

# Children's Budget 2020

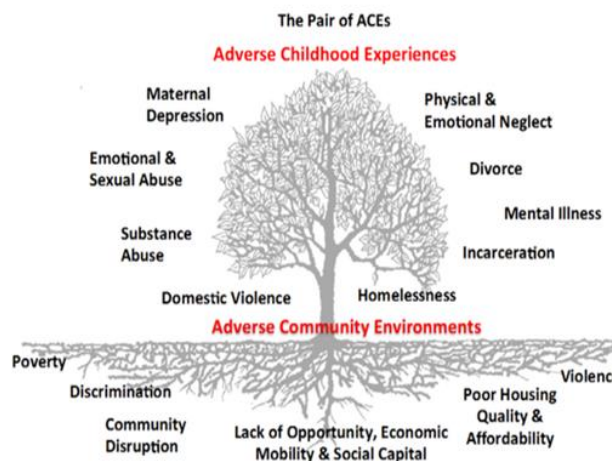
July 2019

## Introduction

Barnardos mission is to help transform children’s lives through our services; support parents; and challenge society where it fails our children. Barnardos works with vulnerable children who have experienced an adverse event in their lives for which they and their parents need support, or children who are living in a challenging environment where their needs are not being met.

In 2019, Barnardos embarked on a new strategic direction under the leadership of a new CEO. Our new trauma informed approach recognises that exposure to adverse childhood experiences such as inappropriate care giving, chaotic environments, unpredictable stress, persistent fear, or physical threat has a negative and defining impact on the developing brain of children damaging their emotional, social and cognitive development. Given our work to date across Ireland, we are particularly concerned about children and families in disadvantaged areas.

Ellis and Dietz (2017)<sup>1</sup> have developed a response to supporting families experiencing adversity both within their community and their family unit. Depicting this interaction as a tree<sup>2</sup>, the leaves represent the readily identifiable such as maternal depression, divorce or domestic violence. At the base of the tree the roots are shown to be anchored in poor soil depicted as community adversity such as poverty, violence or poor housing quality and affordability. This depiction is a useful way of considering the range of factors that can influence a child’s outcomes.



<sup>1</sup> Ellis, W.R. and Dietz, W.H. (2017) *A New Framework for Addressing Adverse Childhood and Community Experiences: The Building Community Resilience Model* – available: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acap.2016.12.011>.

<sup>2</sup> The Pair of ACEs – Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Adverse Community Environments – tree ‘illustrates the relationship between adversity within a family and adversity within a community’ (BCR). See a summary at [https://publichealth.gwu.edu/sites/default/files/downloads/Redstone-Center/Resource%20Description\\_Pair%20of%20ACEs%20Tree.pdf](https://publichealth.gwu.edu/sites/default/files/downloads/Redstone-Center/Resource%20Description_Pair%20of%20ACEs%20Tree.pdf)

Barnardos Children's Budget 2020 sets out what the government must do in Budget 2020 in order to ensure that every vulnerable child:

- gets help when they need it;
- is safe, has enough food and somewhere comfortable to call home;
- has the opportunity to learn and have fun.

## Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation	Department
<p><b>Family support services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restore the cost of living increase to Barnardos and other organisations receiving funding under Service Level Agreements from State Agencies to deliver Family Support services. The absence of a cost of living increase, represents an annual sector-wide cut in real terms, which is no longer sustainable and will further damage service provision in the longer term. <b>Cost:</b> Approximately €3.2m.</li> <li>• Establish a working group to review the current model of funding of Section 56 – 59 (Child &amp; Family Agency) funded organisations. The group should consider the relationship between costs and benefits, particularly regarding proven high quality services and the adequacy of covering the costs of overheads which are a central part of delivering a high quality service.</li> </ul>	<p><b>DCYA</b></p> <p><b>DCYA/DPER</b></p>
<p><b>Waiting list for health services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the Sláintecare Report recommendation for universal primary care giving children access to multidisciplinary primary care services in the community comprising GPs, nurses, physiotherapists, speech and language, social workers and occupational therapists at a cost of €256.6 million over five years.</li> </ul>	<p><b>DoH</b></p>
<p><b>Qualified child increase</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the Qualified Child Increase for older children by €5 per week. The rate of the Back to Work Family Dividend should also be increased by the same amount to support families moving back into employment. <b>Cost:</b> €30.06m</li> </ul>	<p><b>DEASP</b></p>
<p><b>One parent family payment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restore the value of the weekly income disregard to 2011 levels, in line with increased national minimum wage and inflation rates, to €165.62 for all lone parents receiving the One Parent Family Payment, Jobseekers Transitional Payment and Jobseekers Allowance.</li> </ul>	<p><b>DEASP</b></p>
<p><b>Supports to address fuel poverty</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the Fuel Allowance by €5 per week. <b>Cost:</b> €42.05m</li> <li>• Extend the Fuel Allowance payment period by two weeks in Budget 2020, and commit to extending it by a further two weeks in Budget</li> </ul>	<p><b>DEASP</b></p>

Recommendation	Department
<p>2021 in order to bring it back to 2010 payment period of 32 weeks.</p> <p><b>Cost:</b> €53.33m</p>	
<p><b>Housing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pursue a housing-first approach by increasing the output of built and acquired Local Authority and Approved Housing Bodies social housing units in 2020 to ensure that the target of 50,000 social housing homes are delivered by 2021 as committed to in <i>Rebuilding Ireland</i>.</li> <li>• Ring fence funding to provide additional Child and Family Support workers so that every child experiencing homelessness that needs support can access it. These Child and Family Support workers can be based in existing organisations to avoid the need for additional infrastructure. <b>Cost:</b> €4m</li> <li>• Increase investment in homeless preventative services in order to reduce the number of families experiencing homelessness.</li> </ul>	<p><b>DHPLG</b></p> <p><b>DCYA</b></p> <p><b>DHPLG</b></p>
<p><b>Cost of education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restore the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance back to the 2010 level by increasing the rate by €25 per child in Budget 2020. <b>Cost:</b> €3.55m</li> <li>• Provide free school books to all primary school children. <b>Cost:</b> €20m</li> <li>• Increase capitation fees by 10 per cent in order to begin to offset the need for voluntary contributions and return the rates to 2010 levels. <b>Cost:</b> €20m</li> </ul>	<p><b>DEASP</b></p> <p><b>DES</b></p> <p><b>DES</b></p>
<p><b>Free school meals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocate funding to establish a Small Grants Scheme to improve school infrastructure to ensure appropriate facilities for school food provision.</li> <li>• Include an additional budget line to develop a training and support programme for school staff to establish a successful school food programme. <b>Cost:</b> €0.5m</li> <li>• Ensure plans for all new school builds include provision for dining and catering facilities.</li> </ul>	<p><b>DES</b></p> <p><b>DES</b></p> <p><b>DES</b></p>

# 1. Every Vulnerable Child should get help when they need it

## 1.1 Intensive Family Support Services

Barnardos predominantly provides services in the area of Family Support. While most children in Ireland are doing well, according to research between one-fifth and a quarter have poor economic, social and educational outcomes<sup>3</sup>. A key means of tackling inequalities is through provision of early childhood and Family Support services in tandem with early childhood education. Intervening early with intensive child and Family Support service, particularly amongst at risk or vulnerable groups, should be a primary focus to improve outcomes for this vulnerable cohort of children. Services falling under the umbrella of Family Support are normally provided in either a family's home or their community.

In 2019 Barnardos commissioned Just Economics to undertake research on the impact of funding cuts on our services and beneficiaries<sup>4</sup>.

The research found that reductions of funding for intensive Family Support services at a time of increased need is in fact a false economy which leads to an increase in costs to the exchequer.

- First, with reduced capacity of services to respond to increased needs early intervention can be missed and higher pressure is put on more costly later interventions<sup>5</sup>.
- Second, reduced capacity leads to increased waiting lists<sup>6</sup> and pressure to close cases earlier which in turn results in increased re-referrals from previous service users.
- Third, longer wait times also mean that the reason for referral can become more complex and require a longer intervention than was needed at the initial referral.
- Fourth, a reduced funding environment impacts on services staff wellbeing (see Appendix One).

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<sup>3</sup> Walsh, B. and Cullinan, J. (2015) 'Decomposing socioeconomic inequalities in childhood obesity: Evidence from Ireland'. *Economics and Human Biology*, (16) pp. 60-72.

<sup>4</sup> Just Economics (2019) *Breaking Point: Why investment is needed now to ensure the sustainability of quality services for children and families*. Summary findings are available in Appendix One.

<sup>5</sup> For example, by intervening early, problems can be addressed before they become more complex and require more intensive responses. At a recent hearing of the Public Accounts Committee, Tusla stated that the cost of residential care is €300,000 per placement per annum. Public Accounts Committee, 2017 Annual Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General and Appropriation Accounts Vote 40 - Children and Youth Affairs – available: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/committees/?id=2019-06-13a.246&s=children%2C+guardian+ad+Litem%2C+child+care+act#g250>

<sup>6</sup> As part of Just Economics research a survey was conducted with Barnardos Project Leaders, key findings of which are highlighted in the report.

It is a decade since Barnardos agreed to temporary cuts to funding for services provided on behalf of the state. Cost of living increases were also stopped. In response to these cuts, Barnardos implemented a number of emergency measures to ameliorate the impact of this cut on children and families. These measures include – pay cuts, pay freezes, temporary layoffs, renegotiation of rents and other parts of the cost base, redundancies and in some cases service closures or retrenchments.

Since the implementation of this first cut in 2009, funding received from the state for the delivery of services has continuously been squeezed. The cumulative impact of which is that for every euro it costs Barnardos to provide the service that has been contracted for by Tusla under a Service Level Agreement, less than 70 cent is provided by Tusla compared to 80 cent in 2008.

The research<sup>7</sup> also highlights the importance of high-quality service providers in achieving better long-term benefits from Family Support. External interviews conducted as part of this process indicate that Barnardos services are held in high regard in terms of quality, professionalism, good governance and are trusted by the community<sup>8</sup>. A survey conducted as part of the Just Economics research identified a number of staff wellbeing issues which will ultimately impact on the delivery of quality services.

The funding gap for high-quality consistent service providers, such as Barnardos, is fast approaching crisis point and business as usual is no longer possible. The cuts, which were initially thought to be a 'temporary' response to the recession, appear to have become permanent with the post-crisis funding formula is now being applied to new services. To ensure the sustainability of all Family Support providers and their services, urgent action to restore funding is now required along with a commitment to review the current model of funding of Section 56-59 (Tusla) funded organisations.

#### Recommendations:

- Restore the cost of living increase to Barnardos and other organisations receiving funding under Service Level Agreements from State Agencies to deliver Family Support services. The absence of a cost of living increase, represents an annual

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<sup>7</sup> Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2016) In brief: Early Childhood Programme Effectiveness – Available at: <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-early-childhood-program-effectiveness/>

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix Two for detailed comparison of Barnardos services in relation to the characteristics of effective early intervention services.

sector-wide cut in real terms, which is no longer sustainable and will further damage service provision in the longer term. **Cost:** Approximately €3.2m<sup>9</sup>.

- Establish a working group to review the current model of funding of Section 56 – 59 (Child & Family Agency) funded organisations. The group should consider the relationship between costs and benefits, particularly regarding proven high quality services and the adequacy of covering the costs of overheads which are a central part of delivering a high quality service.

## 1.2 Waiting lists for health services

Many of the children that Barnardos work with require services which require a particular speciality such as child psychology or psychiatry or speech therapy. Increasingly we are seeing children who are waiting for assessment and treatment from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) and disability services. It is particularly concerning that many young children have to wait a year for an assessment.

Through our work, we hear stories every day from parents of children whose lives are affected and whose health is suffering because the public health system is ineffective and their children are on waiting lists to be assessed and then again on another waiting list to receive treatment. Getting access to medical assessments and treatment at the time a child needs them is crucial, as delays can and do impair their ability to grow and thrive.

Barnardos services are based at 42 centres throughout Ireland and we see that strong regional disparities exist across the country in relation to how quickly a child will receive an assessment or treatment. This regional disparity is illustrated in Figure 1 which shows the percentage of children on the waiting list, for CAMHS in each Community Health Organisation (CHO) area, for longer than a year<sup>10</sup>. Waiting times in CHO 4 (Cork and Kerry) are the worst with 29 per cent of children waiting longer than one year. Other problem areas are CHO 3 (Clare, Limerick, North Tipperary) where 18 per cent of children were waiting longer than one year, and in CHO 8 (Laois, Offaly, Longford, Westmeath, Louth and Meath) 13.5 per cent of children were waiting longer than one year. A year is a very long time in a child's development.

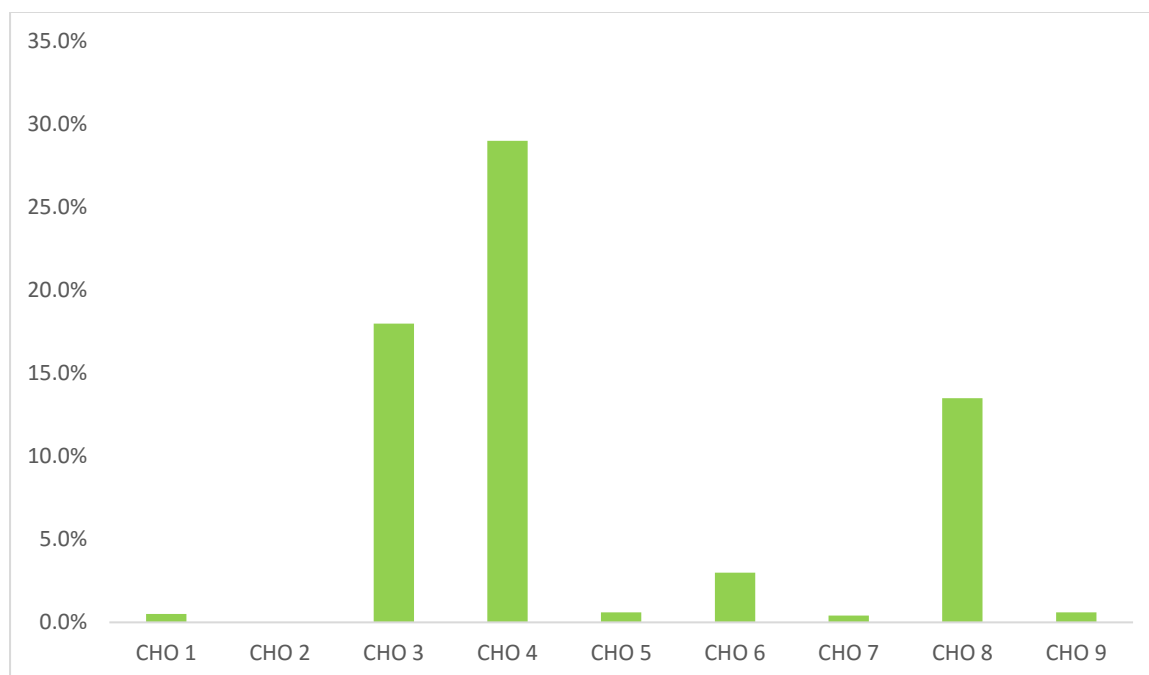
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<sup>9</sup> In 2017 Section 56 – 59 organisations received almost €106m in funding from Tusla (see [https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Annual\\_Financial\\_Statements\\_2017\\_FINAL\\_signed\\_including\\_CAG\\_Certificate.pdf](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Annual_Financial_Statements_2017_FINAL_signed_including_CAG_Certificate.pdf)) 3 per cent of this total is approximately €3.2m.

<sup>10</sup> Data collated from response to PQ Ref. Nos. 36563/64/65/66.



**Figure 1 – Children waiting longer than one year for CAMHS services July 2018**



Similar disparities are evident in relation to access to Assessment of Need for children with a disability and for those waiting for Speech and Language Therapy<sup>11</sup>.

The impact of lack of access to timely healthcare has significant repercussions for children's development. Later interventions are more likely to be both unsuccessful and far more costly.

A lack of access to services for children with a diagnosed disability or who are waiting for an Assessment of Need is a common experience for many of the families with whom Barnardos works. In one of our Early Years and Family Support services Barnardos' staff estimate that over half of their case load relate to children with additional needs. These children may be on the autistic spectrum, have mild to moderate learning difficulties, dyslexia or undiagnosed foetal alcohol syndrome.

The Growing Up in Ireland study shows a strong correlation between lower income levels and poorer health outcomes. Health problems were reported by 33 per cent of parents of children in the lowest social class versus 22 per cent in the highest<sup>12</sup>. Children in lower social

<sup>11</sup> Barnardos (2018) *Winter Waiting List Report – November 2018* – available <https://www.barnardos.ie/media/2781/barnardos-2018winter-waiting-list-report.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Williams, J. et al (2018) *Growing Up in Ireland National Longitudinal Study of Children the Lives of 13-Year-Olds* – available <https://www.esri.ie/system/files/media/file-uploads/2018-10/BKMNEXT368.pdf>

classes were also more likely to have a chronic illness with correlated consequences being a negative influence on academic performance and impacts in adulthood, such as their future socioeconomic position<sup>13</sup>.

Parents' frustration means that in many instances they are forced to pay for private services to access the care their child requires, but this often comes at the expense of paying regular household bills. The strain placed upon these families is enormous. However, even securing private assessments does not automatically trigger access to treatment in the public system. Often parents are told their child must be assessed through the public system for access to treatment publicly. For other parents who don't seek a private assessment, they have no choice but to wait for assistance through the public system.

Recommendations:

- Implement the Sláintecare Report recommendation for universal primary care, giving children access to multidisciplinary primary care services in the community comprising GPs, nurses, physiotherapists, speech and language, social workers and occupational therapists at a cost of €256.6 million over five years.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 54.

## **2. Every Vulnerable Child needs to be safe, have enough food and somewhere comfortable to call home**

The Government previously made a commitment to lift 100,000 children out of poverty by 2020 and while some progress has been made there is still a long way to go. Poverty affects children in profound and long lasting ways. Poverty worsens a child's physical health, mental health, education and causes social exclusion and isolation. Poverty increases the chances of a child experiencing homelessness, domestic violence and emotional abuse; these in turn increase a child's chance of experiencing poverty as an adult.

Budget 2020 can lift more children out of poverty by introducing a number of targeted measures. These measures should target the poorest households and those at most risk of income adequacy such as families with older children and lone parents. Ensuring that children and their families have a safe and comfortable place to call home is particularly challenging in the current housing crisis. While Barnardos advocates strongly that building social housing needs to be expedited in the interim parents and children need support. Furthermore for low income families living in poorly quality housing, supports to tackle rising fuel costs are essential.

### **2.1 Qualified Child Increase**

The Qualified Child Increase (QCI) is key in assisting families with children who are dependent on social welfare for their income.

According to the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice's (VPSJ) Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL) the costs associated with older children are calculated to be 63 per cent more than for younger children<sup>14</sup>. Furthermore, the VPSJ analysis of social protection income indicates that while income from social welfare meets 90 per cent of the costs for families with a younger child this falls to 62 per cent for those with an older child. Households with children over the age of 12 years were more likely to be experiencing deep income inadequacy – that is their income met less than 90 per cent of MESL costs.

Barnardos welcomed the increase in Budget 2019 in the QCI payment, and in particular the targeting of an extra €3 for children aged 12 years and over which was a welcome step in supporting these families. However, we support the latest analysis from the VPSJ<sup>15</sup> which indicates that the impact of this increase was modest and that in order for this to have a

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<sup>14</sup> VPSJ (2019) *Minimum Essential Standard of Living 2019 – Update Report* – available:

[https://www.budgeting.ie/download/pdf/mesl\\_2019\\_update\\_report.pdf](https://www.budgeting.ie/download/pdf/mesl_2019_update_report.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

meaningful impact subsequent budgets must continue to increase this payment for this age cohort.

Recommendation:

- Increase the Qualified Child Increase for older children by €5 per week. The rate of the Back to Work Family Dividend should also be increased by the same amount to support families moving back into employment. Cost: €30.06m<sup>16</sup>

## 2.2 One Parent Family Payment

Children living in one parent families have been disproportionately impacted by austerity policies. Poverty data from the CSO as well as the monthly homeless figures show that this family type are consistently shown to be more likely to live in poverty<sup>17</sup> and disproportionately represented in homeless figures<sup>18</sup>. The VPSJ research also shows that this household type experiences the greatest rate of deep income inadequacy<sup>19</sup>.

Accessing employment with sufficient remuneration to cover the additional expenses incurred by lone parents is a persistent issue. Analysis of data by the Society of St Vincent de Paul has highlighted that one parent families with 'lower childcare needs' have greater rates of employment. The costs associated with childcare were also found to impact negatively on returns from work<sup>20</sup>.

Statutory income supports for lone parents should not only be available for those who need them but must enable parents to access the labour market where appropriate. While Budget 2019 made a welcome step towards increasing the income disregard, this needs to be built on further to ensure that one parent families have an equal chance to thrive as two parent families.

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<sup>16</sup> Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (2019) *Pre-Budget Forum €1 Ready Reckoner* – distributed to attendees at pre-budget forum.

<sup>17</sup> The latest EU-SILC figures show that households containing one adult with children under the age of 18 years have the highest at risk of poverty, consistent poverty and deprivation rates. CSO (2018) *Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2017* – available

<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilc2017/>

<sup>18</sup> The latest figures from the Department of Housing which indicate that 58 per cent of the families experiencing homelessness are one parent families (versus x per cent of the general population). Department of Housing (2019) *Homeless Figures – May 2019* - available:

[https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/homeless\\_report\\_-\\_may\\_2019.pdf](https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/homeless_report_-_may_2019.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> VPSJ, (2019), p. 16.

<sup>20</sup> Society of St Vincent de Paul (2019) *Working, Parenting and Struggling? An analysis of the employment and living conditions of one parent families in Ireland*. Available at

<https://www.svp.ie/getattachment/6cd5834e-a8cf-48bf-b14c-82227aa5bc61/Working,-Parenting-and-Struggling-Full-Report.aspx>

### Recommendation:

- Restore the value of the weekly income disregard to 2011 levels, in line with increased national minimum wage and inflation rates, to €165.62 for all lone parents receiving the One Parent Family Payment, Jobseekers Transitional Payment and Jobseekers Allowance.

### **2.3 Supports to help Address Fuel Poverty**

Overall the VPSJ has calculated that the costs associated with a MESL have had a negligible change between 2018 and 2019<sup>21</sup>. However, the energy budget has increased by 4.6 per cent<sup>22</sup>. An examination of the Consumer Price Index sub-indices of energy costs highlights that specific items such as electricity and gas had a higher percentage increase between May 2018 and May 2019 at 5.1 per cent and 11.1 per cent respectively<sup>23</sup>. What is often overlooked, however, is the disproportionate impact such price increases have on those with the least disposable income. Fuel and light represent 9.3 per cent of household expenditure for families in the lowest income decile compared with just 3 per cent for those in the highest decile<sup>24</sup>.

Fuel poverty is detrimental to children's health and wellbeing. Living in cold and damp homes puts children at increased risk of respiratory and other illnesses<sup>25</sup>. The pressure fuel poverty puts on the household budget can mean children have less food, clothes and other basic necessities. The current housing crisis also means that many families are living in substandard accommodation, afraid to complain and with no option to move. For families living in accommodation which is draughty, mouldy or has broken windows for example, access to fuel is vital.

### Recommendations:

- Increase the Fuel Allowance by €5 per week. **Cost:** €42.05m<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> VPSJ (2019) *Minimum Essential Standard of Living 2019 – Update Report* – available: [https://www.budgeting.ie/download/pdf/mesl\\_2019\\_update\\_report.pdf](https://www.budgeting.ie/download/pdf/mesl_2019_update_report.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p.8

<sup>23</sup> Central Statistics Office. (2018) *Consumer Price Index Dataset*. Available at <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CPM16&PLanguage=0> [accessed 13 June 2019]

<sup>24</sup> Central Statistics Office. (2017) *Household Budget survey 2015-2016*. Dublin: Central Statistics Office

<sup>25</sup> World Health Organisation (2011) *Environmental burden of disease associated with inadequate housing*. Geneva: World Health Organisation.

<sup>26</sup> DEASP, €1 Ready Reckoner.

- Extend the Fuel Allowance payment period by two weeks in Budget 2020, and commit to extending it by a further two weeks in Budget 2021 in order to bring it back to 2010 payment period of 32 weeks. **Cost:** €53.33m<sup>27</sup>

## 2.4 Housing

The shameful impact of the housing crisis was recently highlighted by the Ombudsman for Children in his report – *No Place Like Home*<sup>28</sup> – which captured the views and experience of children living in Family Hubs. Children consulted by the Ombudsman described how they feel shame, embarrassment, sadness and anger for the circumstances they are living in. Children also felt a sense of unfairness as they struggle to understand why they do not have a home.

The experiences expressed in the Ombudsman’s report are all too familiar to Barnardos project staff as the housing crisis is affecting many of the families we work with throughout the country. A recent examination of data gathered from Barnardos’ case work with families and children indicates 25 per cent of individuals whose needs we assessed had one or more housing need. Examples of the types of housing need recorded include living in overcrowded conditions or temporary accommodation, facing the threat of homelessness and not having a suitable home. For children living in any of these circumstances, this can mean a lack of privacy, a lack of space to play or do homework, sharing a bed with a parent or sibling, sleeping on a couch or in overcrowded bedrooms, and in many cases enduring long journeys back to their original school.

Barnardos provides vital supports to families experiencing homelessness and we help parents to navigate other systems of support. We are acutely aware, however, that not all families have access to our services nor can we provide as much support as is required in the current family homelessness crisis. The early years of a child’s development are the most important and in too many cases this is being damaged by children experiencing the trauma of homelessness.

However, it is critical that the government does not only focus on addressing the problem of homeless once it occurs. Investment in preventative services is essential. Organisations such as Threshold through their services in the area of advocacy advice, Residential

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> Ombudsman for Children’s Office (2019) *No Place Like Home* - <https://www.oco.ie/news/i-know-its-a-house-but-its-not-a-home-family-hubs-through-the-eyes-of-children-who-live-there/>

Tenancy Board representation and Tenancy Protection, ensured that 4,376 families were prevented from experiencing homelessness in 2017<sup>29</sup>.

Recommendation:

- Pursue a housing-first approach by increasing the output of built and acquired Local Authority and Approved Housing Bodies social housing units in 2020 to ensure that the target of 50,000 social housing homes are delivered by 2021 as committed to in Rebuilding Ireland.
- Ring fence funding to provide additional child and Family Support workers so that every child experiencing homelessness that needs support can access it. These child and Family Support workers can be based in existing organisations to avoid the need for additional infrastructure. **Cost:** €4m
- Increase investment in homeless preventative services in order to reduce the number of families experiencing homelessness.

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<sup>29</sup> McCafferty, J.M. (2019) *The Curse of the Cure*, 10 March available - <https://www.threshold.ie/blog/2019/03/10/the-curse-of-the-cure/>

### **3. Every Vulnerable Child should have the opportunity to learn and have fun**

Providing all children with an equal opportunity to learn and access education will have a transformative impact on their childhood and on to adulthood. All parents, regardless of income, find the costs of going back to school causes both stress and a strain on their finances. This experience is magnified for families who are already struggling financially or who have additional family challenges. To provide truly free education to all children in Ireland would cost a relatively small amount of money. But the results would be truly transformative. By enabling all children to have a positive and rewarding educational experience pays benefits not just in childhood but further on into adulthood.

#### **3.1 Cost of Education**

Barnardos annual School Costs Survey<sup>30</sup> consistently shows parents under significant financial burden due to the cost of returning to school. Each year comments from our survey show the pressure placed on families by the cost of sending children to school is palpable. A very small proportion of school costs are spread throughout the year meaning parents have to pay out a lump sum at the start of the school year.

Tackling the costs of education can be achieved through a number of measures. The costs of uniforms and footwear for low income families can be supported through the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance. Providing all primary school pupils with free books means that all children will start off school with the same resources. Increasing the capitation fees will alleviate the pressure on schools, which is invariably passed on to parents in the form of voluntary contributions and other charges<sup>31</sup>.

As Barnardos has repeatedly shown, the cost of sending a child to school has gone up steadily in recent years and the cost of clothes and footwear contributes to this. The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance is a much needed and targeted allowance for low income families which contributes towards these costs. The recent increase in the rates bringing it to €150 per primary school pupil and €275 per secondary pupil were much needed. However, further work needs to be done to restore the rates to their 2010 levels.

To date there has been no help for families with the cost of children's school books even though the costs of providing free primary school books for all children would cost just a

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<sup>30</sup> Barnardos (2018) *School Costs Survey 2018* – available: <https://www.barnardos.ie/media/1413/barnardos-2018schoolcostssurvey-briefingpaper.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> Barnardos School Costs Survey 2018 found that parents are frequently asked to pay a classroom resources fee to cover the costs of photocopying and art supplies.



fraction of the Department of Education's overall budget. But the benefit of ensuring that all children have the same resources in the classroom would be significant.

Barnardos welcomes the introduction of a 5% increase in the capitation grant in Budget 2019, but further investment is needed to restore the rate to 2010 levels. Increases should take account of recent increases in costs (such as heating and insurance) as well as addressing the chronic under resourcing of our school system. It is critical that any increases have a positive impact on the burden of voluntary contributions and other costs falling on parents. Leadership from the Department of Education is necessary to ensure extra departmental funding for schools means less funding by parents.

#### Recommendations:

- Restore the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance back to the 2010 level by increasing the rate by €25 per child in Budget 2020. **Cost:** €3.55m<sup>32</sup>
- Provide free school books to all primary school children. **Cost:** €20m
- Increase capitation fees by 10 per cent in order to begin to offset the need for voluntary contributions and return the rates to 2010 levels. **Cost:** €20m

### **3.2 Free meals scheme**

According to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, almost 10 per cent of the Irish population experience food poverty<sup>33</sup>. The Children's Rights Alliance as part of the No Child 2020 campaign<sup>34</sup> have highlighted that research shows that hunger is associated with aggression and anxiety in young children<sup>35</sup>. There are a combination of factors that contribute to the experience of food poverty amongst them are the issues of affordability and accessibility.

For families on a low income accessing a nutritious and balanced diet is particularly challenging. As highlighted earlier in this submission, families with older children face

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<sup>32</sup> DEASP, €1 Ready Reckoner.

<sup>33</sup> Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (2019) *Social Inclusion Monitor 2017* - available at: [http://www.welfare.ie/en/pdf/Social\\_Inclusion\\_Monitor\\_2017.pdf](http://www.welfare.ie/en/pdf/Social_Inclusion_Monitor_2017.pdf) p.

<sup>34</sup> Barnardos are a member of the Children's Rights Alliance and participate on the Steering Group of the campaign.

<sup>35</sup> Cook, J.T. and Frank, D.A. (2008) Food Security, Poverty, and Human Development in the United States, *Ann N Y Acad Sci.* 1136: 193-209.

increased costs compared to those with younger children. Two thirds of these higher costs relate to food, clothing, personal care and social inclusion<sup>36</sup>.

Those in rural areas with no access to private or public transport are reliant on local but often more expensive shops with more restricted food choices. Families experiencing homelessness and who are being accommodated in hotels have particular challenges in terms of food storage and preparation<sup>37</sup>.

The initiation of a pilot hot school meals scheme earlier in 2019, and its extension to 7,200 children from September was a welcome step towards ensuring that children can get access to a nutritious hot meal. Barnardos welcome Minister Doherty's indication that provision will be made to extend the pilot in Budget 2020<sup>38</sup>. To support this, infrastructural grants need to be made available to schools who need to add appropriate facilities.

Recommendation:

- Allocate funding to establish a Small Grants Scheme to improve school infrastructure to ensure appropriate facilities for school food provision.
- Include an additional budget line to develop a training and support programme for school staff to establish a successful school food programme. Cost: €0.5m
- Ensure plans for all new school builds include provision for dining and catering facilities.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p.

<sup>37</sup> Share, M. & Hennessy, M. (2017). Food Access and Nutritional Health among Families in Emergency Homeless Accommodation. Dublin: Focus Ireland – available <https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Share-and-Hennessy-2017-Food-Access-Report-%E2%80%93Main-Report-FINAL.pdf>

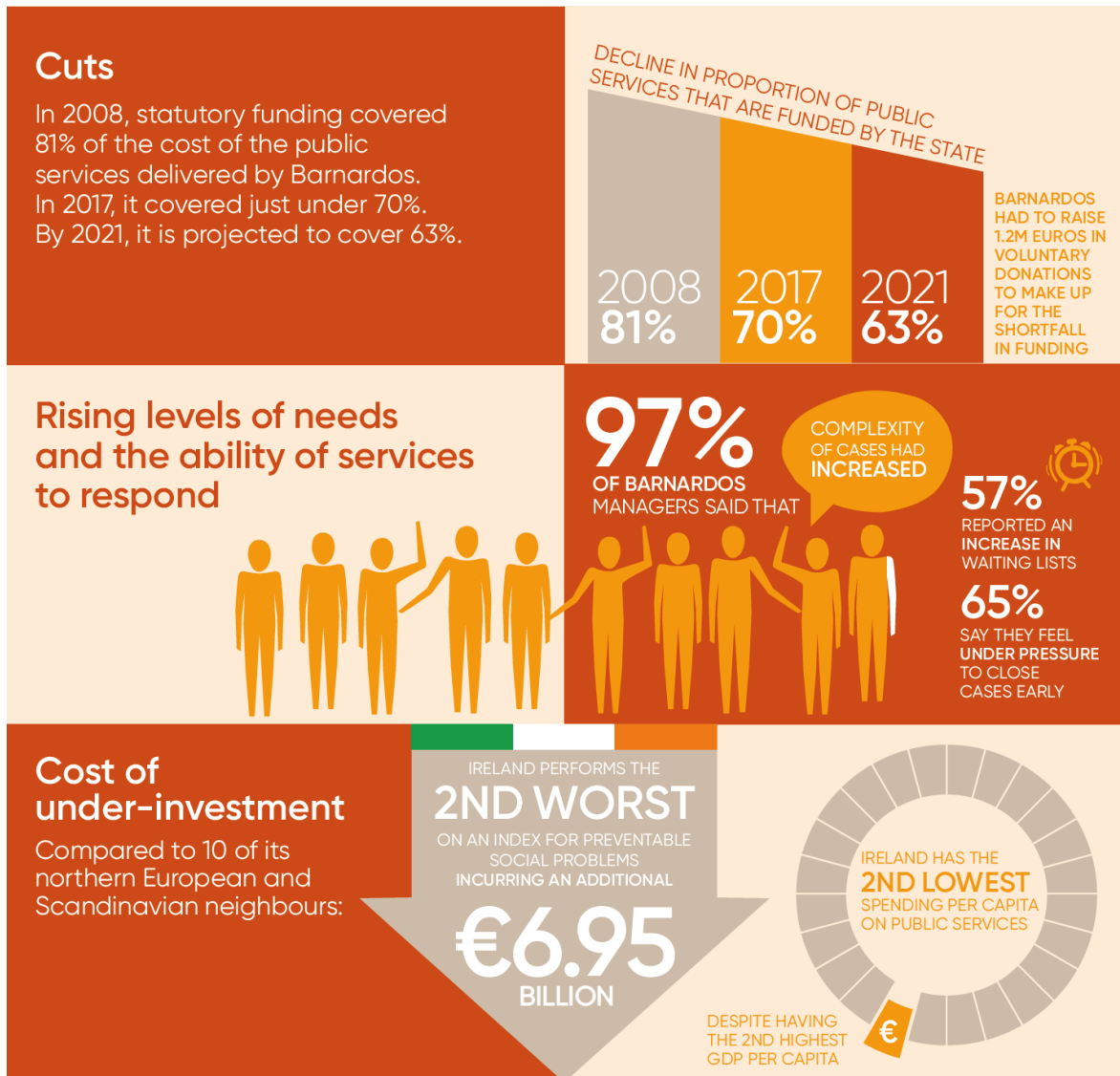
<sup>38</sup> <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/free-hot-meals-could-be-introduced-in-all-schools-under-proposed-plan-1.3772423>

## 4. Conclusion

In Barnardos Children's Budget 2020 we provide cross-departmental recommendations in order for Budget 2020 to have a transformative impact on the children and families that we works with. Actions identified in this submission are the responsibility of a number of government departments, including the Departments of Children and Youth Affairs, Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Education and Skills, Health, Housing, Planning and Local Government and Public Expenditure and Reform. Delivering real change for children cannot be achieved by one department alone. Income supports must be combined with investment in services. By implementing the recommendations outlined in this submission the government can begin to make a transformative impact on the lives of children experiencing adverse childhood experiences and who are living in adverse community environments.

## Appendix One:

# Breaking Point: Why investment is needed now to support children and families - Summary Findings



## What needs to be done

Providers are at a crisis point and urgent action is required



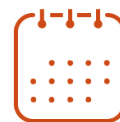
IMMEDIATE RESTORATION OF THE 3% COST OF LIVING FORMULA



REVIEW OF THE FUNDING FORMULA



COMMITMENT TO FUNDING 95% OF THE COST OF FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES



LONGER TERM PLAN TO FUND EARLY INTERVENTION & PREVENTION

## Appendix Two:

### Characteristics of effective early intervention services

In 2019, Barnardos commissioned Just Economics to undertake research on the impact of funding cuts on Barnardos services and its beneficiaries. As part of this research they provided an analysis of the characteristics of effective early intervention services<sup>39</sup> and how Barnardos compares with these.

**Qualified and appropriately compensated personnel** Barnardos has long recognised the importance of the recruitment, development and retention of a skilled workforce as being critical for success and continue – in spite of funding environment - to strive to ensure staff are skilled, trained, and compensated fairly to ensure consistency and quality of implementation of our programmes. Barnardos entry level for direct work with families is a relevant practice based qualification at Level 6 and 7 plus two years post qualification experience; and provides ongoing access to in-house training and continuous professional development

**Small group sizes and high adult-child ratios** Full time staff providing individual, centre and home-based supports have a caseload of approximately 10-12 families on average to ensure that each child receiving a service, receives at the right amount of interventions per the service being offered at the right time.

**Work in the home one to one** Barnardos specialises in home-based, individualised programmes. For example, the Partnership with Parents programme is an individual, home-based parenting support programme tailored to the individual needs of the parent receiving the service.

**Language-rich environment** The Tús Maith Preschool Programme integrates REDI into the High Scope programme to layer in early language development for very young children in Barnardos services. This is a social and emotional coaching approach which gives very young children language for their feelings and supports their oral language development. The Friendship Group programme adopts a social and emotional coaching approach to support children aged 6 to 13 to develop a language for their feelings to enable them to understand their feelings and use words to express them

**Developmentally appropriate “curriculum”** Barnardos invests in using evidence-based programmes to ensure that the work we do is appropriate to the needs presenting in our centres.

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<sup>39</sup> Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2016) *In brief: Early Childhood Programme Effectiveness* – Available at: <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-early-childhood-program-effectiveness/>

**Safe physical setting** Barnardos' centres are bright, warm, welcoming centres, often in the heart of communities affected by community violence and anti-social behaviour which is intimidating for children and families.

**Warm and responsive adult-child interactions** Barnardos practice framework and supervision approach provides for dedicated monthly supervision which enables frontline staff to reflect on their practice, learn from their work and consistently enhance their practice. This lends itself towards respectful, warm and positive interactions between adults and children in Barnardos' services; and between Barnardos staff and parents needing support at a difficult time in their lives