



Pre-Budget submission to the Department of Social Protection Budget 2026

June 2025



About Treoir

Founded in 1976, **Treoir** is the national federation supporting unmarried parents and their families. In collaboration with our member agencies, we champion the rights and welfare of unmarried parents and their children, advocating for their equal treatment under the law.

We recognise the diversity of Irish families and believe all family types marital or non-marital, deserve equal respect, protection, and support from the State. Treoir provides clear, accessible information on family law, available supports, and shared parenting, helping families understand and claim their rights. We are committed to continuously improving how we deliver this vital information.

Our Work Includes:

- Operating a **National Specialist Information Service** for unmarried parents, families, and professionals via phone, website, and outreach workshops.
- Coordinating the **National Young Parent Support Programme**.
- Hosting the **National Programme for Kinship Care Ireland**.
- Promoting and supporting **shared parenting**.
- Conducting and supporting **research** on issues affecting non-marital families.
- Advocating for **legal and social reforms** to benefit lone parent families and their children.

Introduction

Treoir welcomes the opportunity to make a written pre-budget submission to the Department of Social Protection in advance of Budget 2026. Treoir's priority for budget 2026 is poverty reduction, with a particular focus on child poverty, recognising that children are at higher risk of experiencing poverty. It has been consistently shown that One Parent families continue to experience higher levels of poverty compared to two parent households. The SILC report 2024 shows that One parent households have an at risk of poverty rate of 24%, compared to 16.2% for two parent households.

One parent families should be prioritised in Budget 2026, in recognition of their susceptibility to poverty and deprivation. The SILC report 2024 stated that One parent families experienced an enforced deprivation rate of 46.3%, compared to 16.2% for a two-parent household. ¹

Context for Budget 2026

The rising cost of living remains a significant challenge, especially for low-income families who continue to struggle to make ends meet. While the one-off measures introduced in Budget 2025 were welcome, they provided only temporary relief. According to the 2024 SILC report, without these cost-of-living supports, such as energy credits and lump-sum payments, the ‘at risk of poverty’ rate would have risen to 14.1%, up from 11.7%. These short-term interventions cushioned the impact but failed to address the root causes of poverty.

Budget 2026 must move beyond stopgap solutions and adopt a targeted, long-term strategy that responds to the evolving economic landscape and the realities of low-income households. A key focus should be on dismantling *poverty traps*, systemic barriers that prevent families from improving their circumstances, particularly when transitioning into employment. Adequate and sustainable social welfare supports are essential to break this generational cycle of poverty.

Poverty and housing insecurity are deeply interconnected. Families facing homelessness or precarious housing often experience heightened deprivation. Treoir highlights the particular vulnerability of one-parent families, kinship care families, and young parents, groups that require tailored supports. Everyone has the right to a life of dignity and a decent standard of living. Budget 2026 must reflect this by prioritising equity, inclusion, and long-term poverty reduction.

Treoir’s key asks for Budget 2026

¹ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilc2024/keyfindings/>

❖ **Enact the Bereaved partners pension bill:**

To give financial protections to bereaved families in the loss of a parent.

❖ **Benchmark the child support payment**

Increase the payment to align with the primary welfare payment 45% for under 12, and 55% for over 12. This bench marking acknowledges the variation in the needs

Children at different stages of their growth and development.

❖ **Increase the fuel allowance**

Increase the fuel allowance to reflect the rising cost of fuel and the increase in low income households experiencing fuel poverty. Extend the payment to those in receipt of working family payment.

❖ **Increase the income disregard for OPFA and JST**

Increase the income disregard for these payments in recognition that lone parent families face additional childcare costs and that employment can be a way out of poverty for families. The rate of income disregard should be index linked to reflect the minimum wage.

❖ **Make the Guardians payment more accessible to Kinship carers**

In recognition of the great service to the child and to society, the guardian's payment should be more accessible to kinship carers, or an alternative payment should be made available to them.

❖ **Provide targeted supports for young parents**

Provide targeted extra supports to young mothers to allow them to proceed with education.

❖ **Increase the core social welfare rates in line with the cost of living**

Social welfare rates should change in line with the cost of living, ensuring that these increases do not negatively impact eligibility for secondary benefits such as medical cards.

Enact the Bereaved Partners Pension Bill.

In January 2024, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of John O'Meara, granting him access to the widow's pension following the death of his partner, a landmark decision that recognized the rights of non-marital families.

Treoir welcomes the legislation introduced by the Department of Social Protection and appreciates the positive engagement with the Minister. We now urge the prompt enactment of this Bill, with provisions broad enough to include as many bereaved families as possible.

Losing a partner and parent is devastating. Families should not face financial hardship while navigating grief. Many families have lost their homes and still carry the financial burden of the loss of their loved one.

Benchmark the Child Support Payment.

The issue of child poverty should be a priority of every Department. Targeted measures are needed in order to reduce child poverty rates, recognising that certain groups are more at risk; the Child support payment is one such measure. Increases in previous budgets, in particular the introduction of a differential rate for over 12's, though welcome, have not gone far enough to make a substantial difference. According to the MESL report the current rates of CSP do not meet the needs of children, particularly over 12's.

Treoir recommends benchmarking the CSP in line with the core social welfare payment, mirroring the structure used for Qualified Adult Payments (QAP). Specifically, we propose setting the CSP at:

This differential reflects the higher costs associated with older children and ensures resources are targeted where they are most needed.

