

One Family
13/10/2022

Question: What progress do you feel has been made in reducing poverty and social exclusion since publication of the Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 – 2025 in January 2020?

There has been some progress; however, this was largely because of unemployment and wage subsidy supports in response to the global pandemic. The support and certainty offered by the €350 PUP and the EWSS had a direct impact on the levels of poverty in one-parent families which fell, according to EU SILC data, in 2021. The rate of consistent poverty (13.7%), at risk of poverty (22.8%) and deprivation (44.9%) are still unacceptably high.

Based on EU SILC data for 2018, which was used as a baseline for the Roadmap for Social Inclusion, one-parent households were 3.4 times more likely to experience consistent poverty and 2.8 times more likely to experience deprivation than the overall population. Now one-parent households are still 3.4 times more likely to experience consistent poverty and are 3.2 times more likely to experience deprivation. This demonstrates progress has not been made in reducing the additional burden one-parent families face when it comes to poverty and deprivation.

Question: In your experience, what has worked well in reducing the number of people in Ireland experiencing poverty and social exclusion?

In relation to one-parent families, targeted measures, equitable access to supports and investment in affordable and accessible services have worked well. E.g. targeted increases to the IQC and the differentiated rate for older children are positive; however, such increases must be kept in line with inflation or ideally to a MESL. The equivalization of the income thresholds for the BSCFA was an example of ensuring one-parent families have equitable supports and aren't penalized because of their family type.

Increased quality and affordability of childcare is an example of investment in services which has benefitted one-parent families; however, accessibility has reduced due to providers exiting the market highlighting problems with relying on private enterprise to provide public services. In addition, tying access to such a crucial service for children to parents' participation in employment means that some of the children at most in need of the service have least access.

Question: And in your experience, what has not worked so well or is challenging in reducing the number of people in Ireland experiencing poverty and social exclusion?

There has been a dearth of anti-poverty policy aimed at one-parent families. E.g. Budget 2023 was the largest ever and targeted measures for some groups, but no targeted supports for one-parent households. Budget analysis from the ESRI and the Vincentian MESL data found one-parent households fared worst. There are a number of policy inequalities affecting one-parent families. E.g. babies of lone parents receive half the supported time with a parent as babies born to two parents via the Parents Benefit Scheme, PhD stipends are means tested for OFP and JST despite means testing being removed for other payments and the hours threshold for WFP is the same for a one-parent and two-parent families. This typifies the type of willful blindness to the needs of one-parent families endemic in public policy. The lack of regulation of child maintenance remains a problem and directly adds to the high rates of child poverty in one-parent families. The report of the Murphy Review Group must be published immediately.

Question: What would you like to see prioritised in terms of moving people out of poverty and social exclusion, up to the end of the Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 – 2025 in 2025.

A timelined commitment to benchmarking social income to an MESL. Income adequacy is linked to poverty economically, but also the stress it places on a family worried about how to pay rent, heat a home or afford food prevents them from living a fulfilling life, worsens health and educational outcomes.

The Prog for Govt. contains a commitment to prioritising supports for lone parents, having specific regard to the JOC on Social Protection's Report on the Position of Lone Parents (2017), yet the majority of recommendations in the report remain unimplemented. This report should form the basis of the response to one-parent families for the remaining duration of the Roadmap. Establishment of a high-level, inter-departmental group which regularly reports to Government and is tasked with coordinating policy responses aimed at reducing the poverty, deprivation and inequality experienced by one-parent families. This would ensure that one-parent families are no longer an afterthought in the policy development process.

Question: If there are any specific aims, ambitions, commitments or targets in the Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 – 2025 that you would like to comment on, please provide details. This can include identifying gaps in what is included in the Roadmap, or any other comments you may have.

One Family would like to see the commitments specifically targeting one-parent families in the Roadmap expanded in line with the recommendations of the 2017 JOC on Social Protection Report and with the increased burden of poverty and deprivation facing these families. There should be greater prioritization of reducing poverty and deprivation in one-parent households if child poverty is to be reduced.

There is a commitment to inform the level of income disregards with data and evidence, yet the income disregards for OFP and JST haven't increased since 2020 (and weren't increased in Budget 2023), despite inflation rising steadily.

The extension of Parents Benefit by two weeks was welcome but as already outlined, children born to a lone parent get half the time as children who have two parents. This should be rectified as a priority by allowing someone parenting alone to claim the full 14 weeks or allowing them to transfer the Benefit to another carer e.g. a grandparent.

Question: The Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 – 2025 includes 7 high-level goals. Please indicate below which of these goals are most relevant to your participation in the Mid-Term Review.

Extend employment opportunities to all who can work;
Ensure work pays – fair pay, fair conditions for workers;
Support families – reduce child poverty;
Ensure that all people have access to quality services

Question: Which county are you located in?

Dublin

Question: Are you responding on a personal basis or on behalf of an organisation?

Organisation

Question: Which organisation are you responding on behalf of?

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