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Ad hoc report on the cost-of-living crisis

submitted by

THE GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND

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Ireland's Ad-Hoc Report on the Cost-of-Living Crisis

22nd December 2023



This is Ireland’s 2023 response to the request from European Committee of Social Rights and the Governmental Committee for an ad hoc report on the cost-of-living crisis.

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Ireland's Ad-Hoc Report on the Cost-of Living Crisis

Question 1

Please provide information as to whether and how the statutory minimum wage is regularly adjusted/indexed to the cost of living. Please indicate when this last happened, specifically whether it has been adjusted /indexed since the end of 2021.

Response

The National Minimum Wage in Ireland is not currently indexed. A Government decision was made in November 2022 that the minimum wage will be set at 60% of hourly median wages by January 2026. The National Minimum Wage will be retitled to the *National Living Wage* when the threshold of 60% of the median wage is reached.

Since the Low Pay Commission was established in 2015 as an independent body, it has made an annual recommendation to Government on the appropriate rate of the National Minimum Wage.

Under the [National Minimum Wage \(Low Pay Commission\) Act 2015](#), the duty of the Low Pay Commission is to:

“...make recommendations to the Minister regarding the national minimum hourly rate of pay that —

- (a) is designed to assist as many low paid workers as is reasonably practicable,*
- (b) is set at a rate that is both fair and sustainable,*
- (c) where adjustment is appropriate, is adjusted incrementally, and*
- (d) over time, is progressively increased,*

without creating significant adverse consequences for employment or competitiveness.”

The legislation requires that the Commission give consideration to a range of issues when making a recommendation to the Minister for an appropriate rate for the national minimum wage.

As per the Act:

“...the Commission shall have regard to -

- (a) changes in earnings during the relevant period,*
- (b) changes in currency exchange rates during the relevant period,*
- (c) changes in income distribution during the relevant period,*
- (d) whether during the relevant period—*
 - (i) unemployment has been increasing or decreasing,*
 - (ii) employment has been increasing or decreasing, and*
 - (iii) productivity has been increasing or decreasing,**both generally and in the sectors most affected by the making of an order,*
- (e) international comparisons, particularly with Great Britain and Northern Ireland,*
- (f) the need for job creation, and*
- (g) the effect that any proposed order will have on —*
 - (i) levels of employment and unemployment,*
 - (ii) the cost of living, and*
 - (iii) national competitiveness.”*

Since its establishment in 2015, the Commission has, each year, recommended an increase in the minimum wage. This has resulted in the minimum wage increasing from €8.65 in 2015 to €11.30 in 2023.

As referenced earlier, in November 2022 Government agreed to the introduction of a National Living Wage, with no regional or sectoral variations, set at 60% of hourly median wages by January 2026. This will be achieved through incremental changes to the National Minimum Wage over a four-year period, unless otherwise agreed by Government on the advice of the Low Pay Commission. A copy of the Low Pay Commission’s 2023 Annual Report is available— [gov.ie – Low Pay Commission Annual Report 2023 \(www.gov.ie\)](https://www.gov.ie/publications-and-statistics/publications/low-pay-commission-annual-report-2023).

The first step towards reaching a Living Wage was the 80-cent increase to the National Minimum Wage which came into force on 1 January 2023 and increased the minimum wage to €11.30 per hour.

In October 2023, the Government agreed to accept the Low Pay Commission's recommendation to increase the National Minimum Wage by €1.40 to €12.70 per hour from 1 January 2024. This significant increase, of 12.4%, is the largest single increase in the minimum wage since a minimum wage was introduced in Ireland in 2000. This increase represents the next step in the progression to a living wage.

Taking into account the 2024 increase, the minimum wage has increased by €2.50 or 24.5% since 2021.

Minimum Wage Rates for Adult Workers¹ 2021 to 2024

Year (with effect from)	Minimum hourly rate of pay
1 January 2021	€10.20
1 January 2022	€10.50
1 January 2023	€11.30
1 January 2024	€12.70

Question 2

Please provide information on any supplementary measures taken to preserve the purchasing power of the minimum wage since the end of 2021.

Response

In addition to the 24.5% increase in the minimum wage since 2021, a large number of measures have been introduced to help address the cost-of-living crisis.

These measures are outlined further below. A number of these measures will directly benefit many minimum wage workers.

¹ Age based rates: Workers age 20 and over receive 100% of the minimum wage rate; those aged 19 receive 90%; those aged 18 receive 80%; and under-18s receive 70%.

Question 3

For States Parties with no statutory minimum wage, please describe any measures taken to preserve the purchasing power of the lowest wages since the end of 2021.

Response

Question 3 is not applicable to Ireland. Ireland first introduced a National Minimum Wage in April 2000 under the National Minimum Wage Act, 2000.

Question 4

Please provide information as whether the cost-of-living crisis has led to the extension of in work benefits.

Response

The Government is acutely aware of the effect that high energy prices and the cost of living are having on families, businesses and the most vulnerable.

In order to continue to support households and businesses, over €12 billion worth of tax and expenditure cost of living supports have been provided by Government since 2022. This included a number of energy credits for every household in the State as well as other targeted income and other energy related supports.

A further cost of living package - the largest social welfare package in the history of the State - was announced as part of Budget 2024 which will provide almost €2.3 billion in a package of measures to continue to assist households with the cost of living through one-off expenditure supports to households and businesses with a further €0.4 billion delivered through taxation supports.

Please see below information relating to how the cost-of-living crisis has led to changes to in-work benefits.

Working Family Payment

The Working Family Payment is an in-work support which provides an income top-up for employees on low earnings who have children. The Working Family Payment is designed to prevent in-work poverty for low paid workers with child dependents, and to offer a financial incentive to take-up employment. To qualify, a person must be in employment for at least 38 hours per fortnight and have at least one child who normally lives with them or who they support financially.

The child must be under 18 (or between 18 and 22 if they are in full-time day education). The person's average weekly family income must be under a certain threshold for their family size. The payment made is 60% of the difference between the person's average weekly family income and the income limit for their family size. There are approximately 46,000 families with 99,000 children currently in receipt of the Working Family Payment. Estimated expenditure on the scheme in 2023 is €373 million and €376 million in 2024.

Budget 2022 increased the Working Family Payment income thresholds for all families by €10 per week from April 2022. In November 2022, recipients of the Working Family Payment also received a €500 cost of living lump sum payment.

Budget 2023 increased the Working Family Payment income thresholds for all families by €40 per week from January 2023. Additionally, in April 2023, another lump sum of €200 was paid to recipients of the Working Family Payment.

Budget 2024 increased the Working Family Payment income thresholds by €54 per week regardless of family size with effect from January 2024. Budget 2024 also included a €400 cost of living lump sum paid in November 2023 to all families receiving the Working Family Payment.

Increasing the Working Family Payment income thresholds is a targeted measure that is directly linked to household income, and therefore directly supports low-income working families.

Back to Work Family Dividend

The Back to Work Family Dividend scheme aims to help families move from social welfare into employment. It gives financial support to people with qualified children who are in or take up employment or self-employment and as a result stop claiming a jobseeker's payment or a one-parent family payment.

Where a person qualifies, they will get a weekly payment for up to two years. In the first year, this will be paid at the equivalent of any Increases for Qualified Children that were payable on their Jobseeker's or One-Parent Family Payment (up to a maximum of 4 children).

Half that amount will be paid weekly for the second year. There are approximately 2,400 recipients with 4,800 children currently in receipt of the Back to Work Family Dividend. Estimated expenditure on the scheme in 2023 is €11.8 million.

From January 2022, the level of the Increase for a Qualified Child increased by €3 for children aged 12 and over, rising from €45 to €48 and by €2 for children under 12, rising from €38 to €40.

Budget 2023 provided for the weekly rates of the Increase for a Qualified Child to increase from January 2023. Rates increased by €2 to €42 per week in respect of a qualified child under age 12 and by €2 to €50 per week in respect of a qualified child aged 12 or over.

Budget 2024 provides for a €4 increase in qualified child payments from January 2024 bringing the rates to €54 for those aged 12 and over, and €46 for under 12s.

These increases also benefit recipients of the Back to Work Family Dividend as the rate of payment on the scheme is linked to the level of Increase for a Qualified Child which a person received on their previous payment.

Expansion of Social Insurance Benefits to the Self Employed

Since 2017, there has been an extensive expansion of access to the range of social insurance benefits by self-employed social insurance contributors without any

increase in the 4% rate of contribution made by them. In effect, self-employed contributors, in return for a contribution of 11 percentage points lower than the combined employer and employee contribution of 15.05% made in respect of employed contributors, have access to benefits which comprise over 90% of the value of all benefits available to employed contributors.

Further extension of social insurance entitlements and increases in benefits would have to be considered in a budgetary context, taking account of the current economic circumstances and with a view to the sustainability of the Social Insurance Fund (SIF).

For instance, Covid-19 had a significant impact on the SIF's finances where an Exchequer subvention of €2.6 billion was required in 2021. The SIF has since returned to surplus, however it faces considerable long term sustainability challenges which will require action in the short term to avoid the necessity for large social insurance rate increases in the future.

Question 5

Please provide information on changes to social security and social assistance systems since the end of 2021. This should include information on benefits and assistance levels and the allocation of benefits.

Response

Changes are generally made to social protection systems as part of the annual Budget cycle. A summary of the changes introduced as part of Budgets 2022 and 2023 are set out in the tables in the Appendix.

Current rates of payment across Ireland's wide-range of social security benefits and assistance payments are set out in the following document:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/6aec4d-current-rates-of-payment-for-social-welfare-payments-sw19/>

Please see below for information on changes to social security and social assistance systems since the end of 2021.

Increase for a Qualified Child (IQC)

Most weekly social welfare payments include provision for an additional payment of an Increase for a Qualified Child (IQC) in respect of each qualified child up to the age of 18, which is extended to encompass older children to age 22 under certain circumstances.

Recent changes

- In January 2022, the IQC increased by €3 for children aged 12 and over, rising from €45 to €48 and an increase of €2 for children under 12, rising from €38 to €40.
- In January 2023, the weekly rates of IQC increased by €2 for children of all ages.
- Budget 2024 introduced a further increase of the IQC of €4 for children of all ages, increasing to €46 for under 12s and €54 for over 12s.
- Additionally, IQC recipients received a €100 cost of living lump sum in respect of each child in November 2023.

Maternity, Paternity and Adoptive Benefit

Maternity Benefit is a payment made for 26 weeks to employed and self-employed women, who are eligible for Maternity Leave and who satisfy certain social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions.

Paternity Benefit is a payment for employed and self-employed people who are on Paternity Leave from work who satisfy certain PRSI contribution conditions. It is paid for two weeks.

Adoptive Benefit is a payment made to a parent who is on Adoptive Leave from work and covered by social insurance (PRSI). Adoptive Benefit is paid for 24 weeks from the date of placement of the child.

Recent changes

- In January 2022, there was a 2% increase in the €245 rate for Maternity, Paternity and Adoptive benefit to €250 per week.
- In January 2023, there was a further 4.8% increase in the €250 rate to €262 per week.
- Budget 2024 will introduce an increase of 4.6% for the €262 rate to €274 per week from January 2024.

Parent's Benefit

Parent's Benefit is a payment made for 7 weeks per parent to employed and self-employed parents who are on parent's leave and who satisfy certain pay related social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions.

Recent changes

- In January 2022, there was a 2% increase in the €245 rate for Parent's Benefit to €250 per week. In July 2022, Parent's Leave and Benefit were also extended from 5 weeks to 7 weeks.
- In January 2023, there was a further 4.8% increase in the €250 rate to €262 per week.
- Budget 2024 will introduce an increase of 4.6% for the €262 rate to €274 per week from January 2024. In addition, Parent's Leave and Benefit will increase from 7 to 9 weeks from August 2024, in line with the provisions of the EU Work Life Balance Directive.

One-Parent Family Payment

The One-Parent Family Payment is a payment for lone parents under 66, who are not cohabiting, and whose youngest child is under seven.

Recent changes

- In January 2022, there was a 2.5% increase in the €203 personal rate of One-Parent Family Payment to €208 per week. To assist with the cost of living, recipients also received a double weekly payment in October 2022 and a Christmas bonus payment (double week payment) in December 2022.
- In January 2023, there was a further 5.8% increase in the €208 rate to €220 per week. Recipients also received a €200 lump sum payment in April 2023 to assist with the cost of living.
- Budget 2024 will introduce an increase of 5.5% for the €220 rate, bringing it to €232 per week from January 2024. Recipients will also receive a Christmas bonus (double week payment) in December 2023 and a double week payment in January 2024.

Recipients also benefit from the increases to the level of the Increase for a Qualified Child as described further above.

Jobseeker's Transitional Payment

The Jobseeker's Transitional payment aims to support lone parents into the workforce while they have young children. A person may qualify for this payment if they do not live with a spouse, civil partner or cohabitant and their youngest child is between 7 and 13 years old, inclusive.

Recent changes

- In January 2022, there was a 5.8% increase in the €208 personal rate of Jobseeker's Transitional Payment to €220 per week. To assist with the cost of living, recipients also received a double weekly payment in October 2022 and a Christmas bonus payment (double week payment) in December 2022.

- In January 2023, there was a further 5.8% increase in the €208 rate to €220 per week. Additionally, recipients received a €200 lump sum payment in April 2023 and a Christmas bonus payment (double week payment) in December 2023.
- Budget 2024 will introduce an increase of 5.5% for the €220 rate, bringing it to €232 per week from January 2024. Recipients also received a Christmas bonus (double week payment) in December 2023 and will receive a double week payment in January 2024.
- Recipients also benefit from the changes to the level of the Increase for a Qualified Child as described further above.

Deserted Wife's Benefit

Deserted Wife's Benefit is a payment made to a woman deserted by her husband. Entitlement to the payment is based on social insurance contributions paid by the woman or her husband as well as a number of other qualifying criteria. The Deserted Wife's Benefit scheme was closed off to new applications with effect from 2 January 1997, when One-Parent Family Payment was introduced.

Recent Changes

- In January 2022, there was a 2.4% increase in the €208.50 rate of Deserted Wife's Benefit to €213.50 per week. A Christmas Bonus (double week payment) was paid in December 2022.
- In January 2023, there was a further 5.6% increase in the €213.50 rate to €225.50 per week. A Christmas Bonus (double week payment) was paid in December 2023.
- Budget 2024 introduced a 5.3% increase in the €225.50 rate to €237.50 per week from January 2024. A once-off double week payment will also be paid in the week beginning 29 January 2024.

For recent changes to the Working Family Payment and the Back to Work Family Dividend, please see our response under Question 4.

Child Benefit

Child Benefit is a universal monthly payment made to families with children in respect of all qualified children up to the age of 16 years. The payment continues to be paid in respect of children up to their 18th birthday who are in full-time education, or who have a disability. The standard monthly rate (€140) of Child Benefit applies to each child. Twins are paid at one and a half times the standard monthly rate for each child, that is €210 per month for each twin. All other multiple births are paid at double (200%) the standard monthly rate for each child, that is €280 per child.

Recent Changes

- A double Child Benefit payment which was paid in November 2022. The payment was made to 638,000 recipients in respect of 1,203,000 children.
- In addition, as part of a package of measures to assist families with the cost-of-living, recipients of Child Benefit received a lump sum payment of €100 in respect of each child. This was paid in June 2023.
- Budget 2024 provided for recipients to receive a double payment of Child Benefit in December 2023.
- Budget 2024 also provided for Child Benefit to be extended to 18-year-olds in full-time education. This measure will take effect from September 2024. This will cover those at second level or otherwise while they remain in full time education (until their 19th birthday). The measure will benefit families in respect of approximately 60,000 18-year-olds.

Supports for people with Disabilities

Recent changes to support people with disabilities in Ireland include:

- In October 2022, people on Disability Payments received an Autumn double cost-of-living payment.
- In November 2022, a €200 Lump Sum Payment was paid to people with a disability receiving the Living Alone Allowance as well as €500 cost-of-living Disability Support Grant was paid to all people receiving a long-term Disability Payment.

Further supports for people with disabilities as part of Budget 2023 included:

- A €400 Lump Sum Fuel Allowance Payment.
- Christmas Bonus Double Payment to all persons receiving a long-term Disability Payment.
- Domiciliary Care Allowance was increased by €20.50 to €330 per month with effect from January 2023.
- €12 increase in weekly Disability payments with proportionate increases for qualified adults and for people who receive a reduced rate from January 2023.
- Domiciliary Care Allowance will be available in respect of children with severe illness or disability who remain in hospital for up to six months after birth.
- Disablement Benefit will be disregarded in the means assessment for Fuel Allowance with effect from January 2023.
- €1m expansion of the Reasonable Accommodation Fund to support people with disabilities in the workplace.
- The earnings disregard for Disability Allowance and Blind Pension will be increased from €140 to €165 with effect from January 2023.

- Means assessment threshold for Fuel Allowance increases from €120 to €200 with effect from January 2023

Supports for people with disabilities in Budget 2024 include:

- A €400 cost of living lump sum paid to people getting a Disability Allowance, Invalidity Pension and Blind Pension paid in November 2023.
- A Christmas Bonus double payment to all persons getting a long-term disability payment.
- A €300 cost of living lump sum for those getting the Fuel Allowance, to be paid in November 2023.
- A €200 cost of living lump sum to people who are getting a Living Alone Increase.
- From January 2024, there will be an increase of €12 in maximum personal rate of weekly disability payments. There will be proportionate increases for people getting a reduced rate.
- A January cost of living bonus for most people getting a long-term weekly social welfare payment including those in receipt of disability payments to be paid in 2024.
- Additional funding to include provision for Free Travel Scheme for those medically certified unfit to drive.
- A reduction in the minimum weekly hours threshold from 21 to 15 hours for employers to avail of the Wage Subsidy Scheme.
- An increase in the Carer's Allowance income disregard to €450 for a single person and €900 for a couple.

- The Domiciliary Care Allowance will increase by €10 a month from January 2024

Question 6

Please provide information as to whether social security benefits and assistance are indexed to the cost of living, as well as information in particular on how income-replacing benefits such as pensions are indexed. Please indicate when benefits and assistance were last adjusted/indexed.

Response

Social Protection payments are not indexed to the cost of living, inflation or wages in Ireland.

In September 2022, the Government committed that a smoothed earnings method to calculating a benchmarked/indexed rate of State Pension payments will be introduced as an input to the annual budget process and be submitted to Government each year. This was calculated and submitted to Government this year as part of the Budget process.

With particular regard to State Pension payments, in January 2023, in recognition of the increase cost of living, the rate was increased by €12 per week from €253.30 to €265.30 per week for those in receipt of the maximum rate of payment of State Pension (contributory) and from €242 to €254 for those in receipt of the maximum rate of State Pension (Non-Contributory) with proportionate increases in the rates for those not on maximum rate and for dependent adults.

As part of Budget 2024, these rates will be increased by a further €12 from January 2024. In addition, as part of the Government's continued cost of living measures, those in receipt of State Pensions also received a one-week double payment in December 2022 and in December 2023. A further double payment will also be paid in January 2024.

Many of those in receipt of State Pensions may also qualify for other support payments such as the Living Alone Increase, the Fuel Allowance and Household Benefits package. Both the Living Alone Increase and the Fuel Allowance have attracted additional one-off lump sum payments to assist with cost of living over the period from 2022 to 2023.

Pensioners who qualify for the Living Alone Increase got a lump sum payment of €200 in both Q4 2022 and Q4 2023. Fuel Allowance recipients received 3 lump sum payments in 2022 - €125 in March; €100 in May; and €400 in November. In 2023, recipients received a lump sum payment of €300 in Q4.

Question 7

Please provide information as to whether any special measures have been adopted since late 2021 to ensure persons can meet their energy and food costs, such as price subsidies for energy, fuel, and basic food items.

Response

Since February 2022, the Government has announced a series of taxation, welfare and electricity credit measures intended to assist all households with cost-of-living pressures.

Energy

The provision of three energy credits of €150 over the winter season will smooth out the impact of elevated energy bills as price reductions begin to take effect. The energy credits will be paid in the December 2023, January 2024 and February 2024 billing cycles. The total value of this measure is just over €1 billion and will be part-funded by the €167 million raised thus far from the measures introduced to address the windfall profits of some fossil fuel companies and electricity generators.

Similarly in 2022, €1.2 billion was allocated for energy supports to help consumers with the costs of utilities in 2022 and 2023. All domestic electricity customers got €600 credit to help reduce electricity bills. The credit was paid in 3 instalments of €200. The

first payment was made in November 2022, the second in January 2023 and the third in March 2023

Since 1 May 2022, the rate of VAT on gas and electricity bills reduced from 13.5% to 9%. This reduced rate will remain in place until 31 October 2024.

Budget 2024 includes record funding of €380 million for Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) residential and community energy upgrades, including the Solar PV (photovoltaic) Scheme — this is a €24 million increase on last year and means that more funding than ever will be available to make homes warmer, healthier, more comfortable and less expensive to heat.

SEAI provides free home energy upgrades to households in, or at risk of, energy poverty who are in receipt of certain social welfare payments. The scheme prioritises the oldest and least energy efficient homes.

Fuel Allowance

The Fuel Allowance is a means-tested payment to assist households in receipt of long-term social welfare payments, including pensioners and the long-term unemployed, who cannot provide for their own heating needs. In light of the increased cost of energy a number of significant expansions to the Fuel Allowance scheme were implemented since late 2021 to ensure more people qualify for the payment. The weekly rate of Fuel Allowance payable was also increased and a number of additional cost-of-living lumpsum payments were also paid to people who qualify for the Fuel Allowance payment.

Weekly Rate Increase

From the week beginning 11 October 2021 the Fuel Allowance weekly rate was increased by €5 from €28 to €33 per week. Payment of Fuel Allowance normally begins in late September of each year and ends in April of the following year.

Additional Lumpsum Payments

- In March 2022 an additional lumpsum of €125 was paid to all Fuel Allowance recipients.
- In May 2022 an additional lumpsum of €100 was paid to all Fuel Allowance recipients.
- In November 2022 an additional lumpsum of €400 was paid to all Fuel Allowance recipients.
- In November 2023, a once-off payment of €300 was paid to all Fuel Allowance recipients.

Expansion of Scheme

In addition to the above, significant expansions to the Fuel Allowance scheme were implemented since late 2021 to ensure more people qualify for the payment.

From October 2021, the weekly means threshold was increased by €20 to €120 above the appropriate rate of State Pension (Contributory) enabling more people to qualify for this support.

The qualifying period for Jobseeker's and Supplementary Welfare Allowance recipients was reduced from 15 to 12 months with effect from September 2022, again enabling more people to qualify for the support.

In Budget 2023, the Government announced the largest ever expansion of the Fuel Allowance Scheme. Under this:

- a new means threshold was introduced for people aged 70 or over in January 2023. The new means threshold is €500 for a single person and €1,000 for a couple.

- the amount of capital (savings and investments) that is disregarded in the means test for Fuel Allowance increased from €20,000 to €50,000 in addition, for people aged 70 or over. Savings over €50,000 are assessed on a proportionate basis only.
- the weekly means threshold for those aged under 70 was increased by €80 to €200 above the appropriate rate of State Pension (Contributory).
- Disablement Benefit and Half-rate Carers Allowance payments are disregarded when assessing means for Fuel Allowance purposes from January 2023. Disablement Benefit also no longer disbars a household from receiving the Fuel Allowance payment.

Targeted social protection measures continue to be implemented. Alongside the regular Christmas Bonus payment, all social protection weekly payment recipients will also receive a further double-week payment in January 2024.

In addition, since late 2021 a number of once-off measures have been adopted to support people with the cost-of-living. See Table at Appendix 1 for details of Social Protection once-off supports since late 2021.

Additional Needs Payments

The supplementary welfare allowance scheme (SWA) is the safety net within the overall social welfare system in that it provides assistance to eligible people in the State whose means are insufficient to meet their needs and those of their dependents.

Under the SWA scheme, the Department of Social Protection may make Additional Needs Payments (ANPs) to help meet essential expenses that a person cannot pay from their weekly income or from other personal and household resources. These payments can be made to assist people who face difficulties in meeting household and energy costs.

Household Benefits Package

The [Household Benefits Package](#) (HBP) helps with the cost of a electricity or gas bill. Only one person in a household can get the Package. In general, to qualify for the HBP, persons must be aged 70 or over. For those aged 70 or over, it is not means tested and you do not need to be getting a qualifying payment.

If you are between 66 and 70 you may still get the package if you meet the necessary conditions. You may also get the package if you are under 66 and get Disability Allowance, Invalidity Pension, Blind Pension Incapacity Supplement (for at least 12 months) with Disablement Pension (for at least 12 months) or Carer's Allowance (if you are living with the person you are caring for).

Allowances in the Household Benefits Package include Electricity Allowance of €35 monthly (€1.15 per day) or Natural Gas Allowance of €35 monthly (€1.15 per day).

Since 2021, the spend on HBP has increased from €274.2m to an estimated €285m for 2023 with the number households benefitting from the package increasing from 484,338 to over 511,000 for the same period.

Food related supports include:

School Meals Programme

The School Meals Programme provides funding towards the provision of food services to some 1,700 schools and organisations benefitting 300,000 children in the 2022/2023 school year.

The School Meals Programme provides funding towards provision of food services for disadvantaged school children through two schemes:

- the statutory Urban School Meals Scheme for primary schools is operated by local authorities and part-financed by the Department of Social Protection.

- the non-statutory School Meals Local Projects Scheme provides funding directly from the Department of Social Protection to primary schools, secondary schools and local groups and voluntary organisations which operate their own school meals projects.

Projects are primarily targeted at areas of disadvantage or at children with special needs. Priority for funding is currently given to schools which are part of the Department of Education's initiative for disadvantaged schools, 'Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools' (DEIS).

Further expansion of the scheme

In September 2023, the Hot School Meals Programme was expanded to all DEIS primary schools benefiting more than 60,000 children.

In addition, in December 2023, a further 900 primary schools were invited to participate the Hot School Meals Programme which means that an additional 150,000 children will potentially benefit from nutritious hot meals from April 2024.

This means that from April 2024 a total of 450,000 children will have access to the Schools Meal Programme which includes the Hot Meal Programme,

In addition to the above, Ireland's School Milk Scheme entitles school-going children to a quarter litre of milk on each school day. Pre-schools, primary and second-level schools are eligible for the Scheme. The scheme is managed by the National Dairy Council and funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine with the financial support of the European Union.

Meals on Wheels

Access to a meals-on-wheels service can enable older people to remain living in their own homes and communities or to return to their own home after a period of hospitalisation. The Department of Health provides funding for subsidies, grants and food costs.

It is estimated that Meals on Wheels organisations provided an estimated 2.4 million meals to over 54,000 people in 2022. Budget 2023 saw over 340 Meals on Wheels organisations benefitting from €1.75 million additional funding.

The budget allocated for meals on wheels will increase by €1 million in 2024 to €6.2 million.

Childcare Providers

The Early Years Services Regulations state that Early Learning and Care Service providers must ensure that all children in attendance receive a nutritious diet which takes account of individual needs and preferences. Under these Regulations, Early Learning and Care Services are required to develop a Policy on Healthy Eating.

In May 2023, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth published [Nutrition Standards for Early Learning and Care Services](#). It advises that children in day care for more than 5 hours per session (full day care) should be offered at least 2 snacks and 2 meals, including one hot meal.

The Nutrition Standards for Early Learning and Care Services will be a key resource for implementing the Early Years Services Regulations. The Department subsidise fees paid by parents (subject to certain eligibility conditions depending on the particular scheme) to preschool and school-age childcare providers.

Question 8

Please provide up-to-date information on at-risk-of-poverty rates for the population as a whole, as well as for children, families identified as being at risk of poverty, persons with disabilities and older persons. Please show the trend over the last 5 years, as well as forecasts for upcoming years.

Response

The Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) is the official poverty data for Ireland. When comparing data in the SILC it should be noted that there was a break in time series for the SILC in 2020. This allowed for improved comparability at EU level and improvements in the timely collection and production of data. However, it also

means that income data from the 2020 SILC onwards is not directly comparable with previous years.

Ireland does not undertake forecasts of poverty rates.

As shown in the table below, the ‘at risk of poverty’ rate for the population as a whole declined from 17.5% in 2017 to 11.6% in 2021 before increasing again slightly in 2022 to 13.1%, which was in line with the pre-pandemic 2020 figure of 13.2%.

At-Risk-Of-Poverty (AROP) rates in Ireland 2017- 2022

At-Risk-Of-Poverty (AROP)	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Overall population	17.5%	14.0%	12.8%	13.2%	11.6%	13.1%
Child population	18.4%	15.9%	15.3%	16.4%	13.6%	15.2%
Elderly population	8.6%	11.4%	10.5%	9.8%	11.9%	19.0%
Lone Parents	39.9%	33.5%	29.7%	31.0%	22.8%	23.8%
People unable to work due to long standing health conditions	-	-	-	33.4%	39.1%	35.2%

Source: Central Statistics Office SILC data, various years

It should be noted that the SILC 2022 data relates to income in the calendar year 2021 and does not include the measures implemented and announced by this Government in Budgets 2022, 2023 and 2024, as well as cost of living packages, that have prioritised the introduction of measures that have had and will continue to have a direct and positive impact on poverty.

The AROP rates for specific cohorts have also fallen over the last five years. The AROP rate for children declined from 18.4% in 2017 to 15.2% in 2022, the AROP rate for lone parents declined from 39.9% in 2017 to 23.8% in 2022. The elderly population has, however, has seen an increase in the AROP rate in recent years from 8.6% in 2017 to 19.0% in 2022.

The SILC does not include an exact measurement of people with disabilities, however, the AROP rate for people unable to work due to long standing health problems was 35.2% down from 39.1% in 2021.

National and EU Poverty targets

The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, published in 2021, includes a specific EU-wide poverty reduction target to be achieved by 2030:

“The number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion should be reduced by at least 15 million by 2030” (of which at least 5 million should be children).”

Ireland’s contribution to this headline target is to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROE) by 90,000, at least half of whom will be children.

The Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025 is a whole-of-government strategy with a five-year timeframe which aims to reduce consistent poverty, that is those people who are both at risk of poverty and suffering from material deprivation, to 2% or less and to make Ireland one of the most socially inclusive countries in the EU.

The *Roadmap* also includes a commitment to set a new national child poverty target, work is progressing in this area and will be informed by a [full public consultation](#) currently open for submissions being run by the Department of Social Protection. The deadline for receipt of submissions is the 19 January 2024.

Question 9

Please provide information on what measures are being taken to ensure a coordinated approach to combat poverty as required by Article 30 of the Charter, and to diminish reliance on last-resort relief, such as food banks and soup kitchens.

Response

As previously referenced, Ireland's *Roadmap for Social Inclusion* aims to reduce consistent poverty to 2% or less and to make Ireland one of the most socially inclusive countries in the EU.

Oversight of the implementation of the *Roadmap* is undertaken by a steering group, chaired at Ministerial level, and comprising senior representatives from Government Departments and members from the Community and Voluntary sector.

The Roadmap is part of Ireland's co-ordinated policy response to our commitment under Article 30 of the Charter to *"take measures within the framework of an overall and co-ordinated approach to promote the effective access of persons who live or risk living in a situation of social exclusion or poverty, as well as their families, to, in particular, employment, housing, training, education, culture and social and medical assistance"*.

Following a [mid-term review](#) published in June 2023, the *Roadmap* now includes 81 commitments across 7 high-level goals (up from 66 commitments in the original *Roadmap*). At the end of June 2023, 44 of these commitments were either fully achieved or achieved with ongoing delivery, with a further four commitments in progress on schedule with ongoing delivery, and delivery on 33 commitments in progress.

As part of the review the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) carried out an independent review of targets and indicators used under the Roadmap. The [ESRI report](#) found that most of the targets used to track progress on poverty and social inclusion were both useful and meaningful.

However, the report and submissions from the public consultation noted that the inclusion of some additional targets and indicators would be useful to measure progress.

Therefore, two new targets, including the Gini coefficient (a measure of income inequality) and progress in meeting European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan headline poverty target have been added and are complemented by seven revised targets (for social participation, social housing, education, the anchored at risk of poverty rate and employment rates for people with disabilities).

The third annual progress report on the *Roadmap* and accompanying report card setting out progress in achieving each of the *Roadmap*'s commitments for the period July 2022 to June 2023, is expected to be published shortly and submitted to the Joint Oireachtas Committee social protection, community and rural development and the islands. The first and second progress reports, and accompanying report cards, along with the mid-term review of the *Roadmap* are available at www.gov.ie.

Goal 7 of the *Roadmap* is to “*ensure that all people can live with confidence that they have access to good quality healthcare, housing, energy and food*”. Commitment 61 of the *Roadmap* commits Government to “*develop a comprehensive programme of work to further explore the drivers of food poverty and to identify mitigating actions.*”

The Food Poverty Working Group was established in April 2021 and aims to tackle the issue of food poverty in accordance with this commitment. The membership of the working group consists of high-level officials from a range of Government Departments and relevant representatives from the Community and Voluntary sector.

The Group produced a report ([Food Poverty - Government, Programmes, Supports and Schemes](#)), published in July 2022, which outlined the range of Government programmes, schemes and services relating to food poverty. The report found that €89 million was spent across Government Departments on schemes directly impacting food poverty, such as school meals.

In addition, a research project was commissioned to understand the drivers of food poverty, the services available and the mitigating actions at a local level in two case study areas, one rural and one urban, this work is nearing completion and should be published in the coming months.

To further advance this commitment, Budget 2023 provided €400,000 to introduce a pilot scheme, based on a case work model, to support people experiencing food poverty across three different areas of Ireland. The pilot programme launched in September 2023 and will run for a period of 18 months.

Additional Needs Payments

As highlighted earlier in this document, the supplementary welfare allowance scheme (SWA) is the safety net within the overall social welfare system in that it provides assistance to eligible people in the State whose means are insufficient to meet their needs and those of their dependents.

Under the SWA scheme, the Department of Social Protection may make Additional Needs Payments (ANPs) to help meet essential expenses that a person cannot pay from their weekly income or from other personal and household resources. This is an overarching term used to refer to exceptional and urgent needs payments, and certain supplements. All of the relevant circumstances of the case are taken into consideration by an officer of the community welfare service when deciding the level of support required.

Child Poverty

Reducing child poverty is a core ambition of the government. The development of a new national child poverty target in the Roadmap for Social Inclusion will feed into the wider whole of government approach to address child poverty, including the establishment, in early 2023, of the Child Poverty and Well-being Programme Office in the Department of the Taoiseach.

The Office coordinates government actions that reduce child poverty and foster children's well-being and recently published its first Programme Plan - [From Poverty](#)

[to Potential: A programme Plan for Child Poverty and Well-being 2023-2025](#) - which aims to make Ireland the best country in Europe to be a child.

The initial 2.5 year Programme focuses on six priority areas which the Government has identified as having the potential to make the most difference to children living in poverty.

The initial focus is on making sure that every child and their family has access to:

1. the income they need;
2. early learning and care;
3. reduced cost of education;
4. prevention and mitigation of family homelessness;
5. pathways to access the services they need;
6. and, arts, culture and sports opportunities

Progress on these six areas will bring us much closer to a society where poverty does not undermine any childhood.

In addition, the development of [Young Ireland: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023 – 2028](#), is a whole of government initiative, led by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth focusses on how Government works to realise the rights of children and young people in Ireland.

It includes a specific spotlight programme to focus on the most significant challenges for children and young people, with resources from across government, and the first three spotlights will be on:

1. child poverty
2. mental health and wellbeing, and
3. disability services.

Ireland's [First 5](#) is a whole-of-Government strategy to improve the lives of babies, young children and their families. It is a ten-year plan to help make sure all children have positive early experiences and get a great start in life.

The First 5 Implementation Plan (2023-2025) will focus on progressing First 5's Big Steps and includes a package of measures to tackle early childhood poverty.

Furthermore, shortly after Budget 2024, the Government published, [Breaking the Cycle: New Measures in Budget 2024 to Reduce Child Poverty and Promote Well-being](#), which describes the enhanced steps that the Government is taking to support children to realise their potential and escape inter-generational cycles of poverty.

While the most substantial investment that Government makes in addressing child poverty is through the existing programmes and expenditures, this report provides a whole-of-government overview of new and additional spending in Budget 2024, reflecting the prioritisation of this critical issue.

In developing their Budget plans, every government minister considered their contribution to ending child poverty and promoting child well-being. This report outlines relevant actions and measures identified by 12 Government Departments. Departments will continue to embed this focus as they develop more detailed spending and work planning in the coming months.

School Meals Programme

As previously mentioned, the School Meals Programme provides funding towards the provision of food services to some 1,700 schools and organisations benefitting 300,000 children in the 2022/2023 school year. The objective of the programme is to provide regular, nutritious food to children to support them in taking full advantage of the education provided to them. The programme is an important component of policies to encourage school attendance and extra educational achievement.

Entry to the School Meals Scheme was initially confined to '*Delivering Equality of opportunity In Schools*' (DEIS) primary schools in addition to schools identified by the

Department of Education as having levels of concentrated disadvantage meaning that their students would benefit from access to the School Meals Programme.

Budget 2023 provided €94.4 million for the programme. In February, the Government approved an additional €14.5m to allow access to the Hot School Meals scheme (see below for more detail regarding the Hot School Meals programme) for all remaining DEIS schools from September 2023. Budget 2024 has increased the funding by an extra €42.5m.

Funding under the school meals programme can be provided for breakfast, snack, cold lunch, dinner, hot school meals and afterschool clubs and is based on a maximum rate per child per day, depending on the type of meal being provided.

Hot School Meals

The Hot School Meals was first introduced in 2019 and has been concentrated on primary schools. Since June 2020, there has been an increase from 37 to 1,400 in the number of schools with access to the Hot School Meal option. The Department is committed to continuing to expand the School Meals Programme and building further on the significant extension of the programme that has taken place in recent years. In this regard, the roll out of the Hot School Meals to all remaining DEIS primary and Special schools began in September 2023, benefiting more than 60,000 children.

Budget 2024 is providing for the extension of the Hot School Meals programme to *all* non-DEIS primary schools who apply, on a phased basis throughout next year. In December 2023, it was announced that 900 primary schools have been invited to participate the Hot School Meals Programme which means that an additional 150,000 children will potentially benefit from nutritious hot meals from April 2024.

This means that from April 2024, 450,000 children will have access to the Schools Meal Programme which includes the Hot Meal Programme.

Furthermore, from 2024, the Government intends to commence the roll-out of Hot School Meals to all remaining primary schools on a phased basis. The remaining

primary schools who had not submitted expressions of interest have been advised to submit expressions of interest next year.

Question 10

Please provide information on steps taken to consult with, and ensure the participation of, the persons most affected by the cost of living crisis and/or organisations representing their interests in the process of designing of measures in response to the crisis.

Response

In Ireland, Government Departments routinely run public consultation processes and engage with relevant stakeholders when significant policies are being reviewed or developed.

Roadmap for Social Inclusion

The Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025 is the national strategy for poverty reduction and social inclusion, which aims to reduce consistent poverty to 2% or less.

The Roadmap committed that “an independent mid-term review of the Roadmap” would be undertaken in 2022. All elements of the review were informed by consultation. The mid-term review report was published in June 2023.

The mid-term review was informed by the following independent inputs:

- An independent contractor was appointed to undertake the stakeholder engagement, including a full public consultation which received 42 submissions from a variety of individuals and organisations,
- The ESRI carried out a review of the indicators used in the Roadmap, and
- A Mid-Term Review Advisory Group was established comprising of Roadmap Steering Group members, and an external representative from the National Economic and Social Council.

Some existing commitments have been revised and other commitments have been added.

The Roadmap also includes a commitment to set a new national child poverty target. Work is progressing in this area and will be informed by a full public consultation which is currently being run by the Department of Social Protection. The deadline for receipt of submissions is the 19 January 2024.

In addition, the Department of Social Protection regularly holds formal meetings with stakeholders, such as bi-lateral meetings with the Community and Voluntary Pillar, as well as the Pre-Budget Forum to discuss a broad range of issues.

Social Inclusion Forum

The annual Social Inclusion Forum brings together policy makers, service providers and service users including, NGOs, community and voluntary sector groups and representatives of people experiencing poverty and/or social exclusion, to discuss and debate national policy on poverty reduction. This year's Forum was held on the 1 June. A report of the 2023 Social Inclusion Forum is available at [gov.ie - Social Inclusion Publications \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie/publications).

Community and Voluntary Pillar

The Department of Social Protection in Ireland is very engaged in outreach to the Community and Voluntary Pillar as well as Social Partners.

The Community & Voluntary (C & V) Pillar consists of seventeen organisations invited by Government to provide voice and representation for vulnerable people and communities in developing Ireland's social and economic policies. It is one of the five pillars of social partnership alongside the Employers pillar, the Trade Union pillar, the Farmers pillar and the Environmental pillar.

The members of the C&V Pillar are;

Age Action Ireland

Children's Rights Alliance

Community Platform
Congress Centre's Network
Co-operative Housing Ireland
Disability Federation Ireland
Family Carers Ireland
Irish Council for Social Housing
Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed
Irish Rural Link
Irish Senior Citizens Parliament
National Women's Council
National Youth Council
Protestant Aid
Social Justice Ireland
Society of St Vincent De Paul
The Wheel

Formal round table meetings with the full C&V pillar are held twice a year.

Budget forums

On the day of the Budget, a post-Budget forum is held. This is an opportunity for stakeholders to get more detail on the impact of Budget measures on groups that they represent.

In advance of this, the Department also hosts an annual pre-Budget forum where stakeholders feed in what they wish to see in the forthcoming Budget. The annual pre-budget forums offer an important opportunity for community and voluntary groups, trade union and employer representatives to discuss and debate policy issues, their priorities, and present their thoughts and views on the upcoming Budget.

The forums are all about engagement and also about listening to the stakeholders who work closely with families and our vulnerable citizens every single day. The recent forums, including the pre-Budget 2024, have been framed by the cost-of-living pressures that people continue to face. Over 60 organisations and community groups attended the 2024 pre-Budget 2024 forum held in July 2023.

This engagement informed the cost-of-living package announced as part of Budget 2024 which is the largest social welfare package in the history of the State and will provide almost €2.3 billion worth of measures to continue to assist households with the cost of living through one-off expenditure supports to households and businesses with a further €0.4 billion delivered through taxation supports.

Details of the Department of Social Protection's Budget Package 2022

Budget Measure	Cost	
	2022 €m	Full Year €m
<p>1. Pension Rate Increase Increase the maximum weekly rate of all pension payments (for those aged 66 and over) by €5 per week with proportionate increases for qualified adults and those on reduced rates of payment. <i>[Commenced January 2022]</i></p>	179.3	179.3
<p>2. Living Alone Allowance Increase the Living Alone weekly payment by €3 to €22 <i>[Commenced January 2022]</i></p>	36.0	36.0
<p>3. Working Age Rate Increase Increase the weekly rates of payment for working age recipients (under 66 years of age) by €5 per week, with proportionate increases for qualified adults and those on reduced rates. <i>[Commenced January 2022]</i></p>	196.0	196.0
<p>4. Treatment Benefit Grant To introduce a Treatment Benefit grant of up to €500 towards the cost of wigs/hairpieces/hair replacement systems for people suffering from hair loss due to illness. <i>[Commenced June 2022]</i></p>	0.5	1.0
<p>5. Reduced Contributions for Treatment Benefit Treatment Benefit: - Increase the age threshold at which the requirement to have at least 5 years paid PRSI contributions applies, from 25 to 29 years. <i>[Commenced June 2022]</i></p>	1.4	2.8
<p>6. Farm Assist Amend the list of agri-environmental schemes that attract a disregard under the Farm Assist Scheme. <i>[Commenced October 2022]</i></p>	0.5	2.2
<p>7. Qualified Child Increase Increase the weekly rate of the Qualified Child Increase by €2 per week for children under the age of 12 And Increase the weekly rate of the Qualified Child Increase by €3 per week for children aged 12 and over. <i>[Commenced January 2022]</i></p>	39.3	39.3
<p>8. Parent's Benefit Extend Parent's Benefit from 5 weeks to 7 weeks for parents of children born or adopted after the implementation date.</p>	9.4	19.2

Budget Measure	Cost	
	2022 €m	Full Year €m
<i>[Commenced July 2022]</i>		
9. Working Family Payment Threshold Increase Working Family Payment income thresholds for <u>all</u> families by €10 per week. <i>[Commenced June 2022]</i>	11.5	23.1
10. Hot School Meals Programme Extend the provision of hot school meals to the remaining DEIS primary schools that submitted an expression of interest to avail of hot school meals in 2020. <i>[Commenced January 2022]</i>	3.0	4.1
11. Equalise Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance Increase the income thresholds applied to lone parents for the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance to the threshold applied to two-parent households <i>[Commenced June 2022]</i>	1.5	1.5
12. Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance Increase Increase the rate of payment for the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance by €10 <i>[Commenced June 2022]</i>	2.6	2.6
13. Carer's Allowance Disregards (i) Increase in the amount of capital disregarded in the Carer's Allowance means test to €50,000; and (ii) increase the weekly income disregarded in the means test for Carer's Allowance to €350 for a single person and €750 for a couple <i>[Commenced June 2022]</i>	10.0	20.00
14. Domiciliary Care Allowance Extend period during which Domiciliary Care Allowance can be paid for children in hospital from 3 months to 6 months (including payment of Carer's Allowance for this period) <i>[Commenced January 2022]</i>	1.5	1.5
15. Disability Allowance and Blind Pension Disregards Increase the earnings threshold above which all means is fully assessed, from €350 to €375 for both Disability Allowance and Blind Pension <i>[Commenced June 2022]</i>	0.3	0.6
16. Disability Allowance – General Disregards Increase the general weekly means disregard for Disability Allowance from €2.50 to €7.60 per week <i>[Commenced June 2022]</i>	2.4	4.8
17. Employability Extend access to support grants for jobseekers with disabilities, through an EmployAbility provider. 1. Job Interview Interpreter Grant (JIIG) 2. Workplace Equipment Adaptation Grant (WEAG)	0.2	0.2

Budget Measure	Cost	
	2022 €m	Full Year €m
3. Personal Reader Grant (PRG) <i>[Commenced January 2022]</i>		
18. Wage Subsidy Scheme Increase the rate of the Wage Subsidy by €1.00 to €6.30 per hour <i>[Commenced January 2022]</i>	3.6	3.6
19. Blind Pension- Student Extend the income disregard for bursaries, stipends or scholarships towards completing a PhD to Blind Pension <i>[Commenced January 2022]</i>	0.1	0.1
20. Fuel Package (a) Increase rate by €5, from €28 to €33 per week (b) Increase the income threshold for qualification by €20 (c) Allow recipients of Jobseekers Allowance and Supplementary Welfare Allowance to access Fuel Allowance at 12 months - currently 15 months <i>[Commenced in October 2021, January 2022 and September 2022 respectively]</i>	59.2	62.6
Budget 2022 Package Total	558.3	600.5

Note: As part of Budget 2022 measures, long-term welfare recipients received a Christmas bonus (double week payment) in December 2021

Details of the Department of Social Protection's Budget Package 2023

Budget Measure	Cost	
	2023 €m	Full Year €m
<p>1. Pension Rate Increase Increase the maximum weekly rate of all pension payments (for those aged 66 and over) by €12 per week with proportionate increases for qualified adults and those on reduced rates of payment. <i>[Commenced January 2023]</i></p>	447.3	447.3
<p>2. Fuel Allowance Extend Fuel Allowance to those who are aged over 70 and below the weekly means threshold of €500 for a single person and €1,000 for couple (Household rules still apply) <i>[Commenced January 2023]</i></p>	53.5	53.5
<p>3. Weekly Personal and Qualified Adult rates of payment Working Age recipients Increase the weekly rates of payment for working age recipients (under 66 years of age) by €12 per week, with proportionate increases for qualified adults and those on reduced rates. <i>[Commenced January 2023]</i></p>	436.2	436.2
<p>4. Employment Supports Increase the additional payment of €22.50 on Community Employment, Tús and the Rural Social Scheme by €5, and increase the current rate of Jobs Initiative by €10. <i>[Commenced January 2023]</i></p>	7.8	7.8
<p>5. Farm Assist Increase the disregard for income received from agri-environmental schemes from €2,540 to €5,000 <i>[Commenced January 2023]</i></p>	0.5	0.5
<p>6. JobsPlus Extend access to the JobsPlus scheme <i>[Commenced January 2023]</i></p>	0.1	0.1
<p>7. Qualified Child Increase Increase the weekly rates of the Increase for Qualified Children (IQCs) by €2 per week for children of all ages <i>[Commenced January 2023]</i></p>	30.4	30.4
<p>8. Working Family Payment Increase Working Family Payment income thresholds for all families by €40 per week <i>[Commenced January 2023]</i></p>	16.8	16.8
<p>9. Domiciliary Care Allowance Rate of Payment Increase rate of Domiciliary Care Allowance to €330 per month <i>[Commenced January 2023]</i></p>	14.1	14.1
<p>10. Domiciliary Care Allowance Eligibility Provide Domiciliary Care Allowance to parents of babies who</p>	1.0	1.0

Budget Measure	Cost	
	2023 €m	Full Year €m
remain in an acute hospital after birth for a period of 6 months <i>[Commenced January 2023]</i>		
11. Disability Allowance Increase the earnings disregard for Disability Allowance and Blind Pension from €140 to €165 per week. <i>[Commenced January 2023]</i>	1.0	1.0
12. Reasonable Accommodation Amalgamate the four Reasonable Accommodation Fund grants into a single, flexible grant with increased funding <i>[Commenced January 2023]</i>	1.0	1.0
13. Fuel Allowance (a) Increase the Fuel Allowance means threshold to €200 (b) Disregard Disablement Benefit in Fuel Allowance means test (c) Disregard Half-rate Carer's Allowance in Fuel Allowance means test <i>[Commenced January 2023]</i>	9.8	9.8
14. Pilot Food Poverty Programme Develop and implement a pilot scheme, based on a case work model, to support people experiencing food poverty <i>[Commenced January 2023]</i>	0.4	0.4
Budget 2023 Package Total	1019.9	1019.9

Note: As part of Budget 2023 measures, long-term welfare recipients received a Christmas bonus (double week payment) in December 2022.

In addition, a Cost-of-Living Support package was paid in Q4 2022 which provided 6 additional double and once-off lump sum payments:

- Autumn double payment
- €200 to recipients of the Living Alone Increase
- €400 to all Fuel Allowance recipients
- Double payment of Child Benefit
- €500 to Working Family Payment recipients
- €500 to recipients of Disability Allowance, Blind Pension, Invalidity Pension
- €500 to recipients of the Carer's Support Grant

Details of the Department of Social Protection's Once Off Supports since late 2021

Measure	Date of delivery	Cost	Number of recipients	Target cohort
<u>Spring/Summer 2022</u>				
€125 lump sum payment to households in receipt of Fuel Allowance	March 2022	€49m	372,000 households	Pensioners; working age DSP recipients; those living alone
€100 lump sum payment to households in receipt of Fuel Allowance	May 2022	€37.1m	371,000 households	Pensioners; working age DSP recipients; people living alone
Additional €100 payment for each child for whom Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance	July 2022	€22m	122,000 recipients, in respect of 220,000 children	Families and Children
<u>Autumn 2022</u>				
Double Weekly Payment: €316.4m to 1.4m people	October 2022	€316.4m	1.4m recipients	Long-term DSP recipients
Fuel Allowance €400 lump sum payment: €148.5m to 371,000 households	November 2022	€148.5m	371,000 households	Pensioners; working age DSP recipients; those living alone
Double monthly payment of Child Benefit	November 2022	€170.4m	638,000 recipients (in respect of 1,203,000 children)	Families and Children
Living Alone Allowance €200	November 2022	€46m	191,800 pensioners	People living alone

Measure	Date of delivery	Cost	Number of recipients	Target cohort
lump sum payment			and 42,200 working age recipients (an estimated total of 234,000 beneficiaries)	
Working Family Payment €500 lump sum payment	November 2022	€23m	44,000 recipients (with 97,000 children)	Families and Children
Disability Allowance, Blind Pension, Invalidity Pension and Carer's Support Grant €500 lump sum payment	November 2022	€175m	Approximately 350,000 recipients	Recipients of long term DSP Illness/Invalidity supports ; Carers
100% Christmas Bonus	December 2022	€300m	1.3m recipients	Long-term SW recipients
<u>Spring 2023</u>				
€200 lump sum payment to primary recipient of long-term social welfare payments, on the same basis as the Christmas Bonus, and including Working Family Payment	April 2023	€261m	1.35m recipients.	Long-term DSP recipients
Additional €100 Child Benefit payment, per child	June 2023	€122m	638,000 recipients (in respect of 1,203,000 children)	Families and Children
Additional €100 payment for each child for whom Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance to be paid in 2023	July 2023	€27.3m	153,000 recipients (in respect of 273,000 children).	Families and Children