



## Youth Work Ireland

### **Budget 2022**

Ireland along with the rest of the world is coming out of a traumatic period both economically and personally. As with the previous recession all research has shown young people have been hit the worst by Covid in terms of the economy, their mental health, education, and employment. Their futures need to be front and centre in budget 2022. A series of measures are required to address critical issue for young people.

#### Housing and Homelessness

Housing and Homelessness have been critical issues over the last number of years. Affordability is out of the reach of many ordinary people and this cascades down to many others in society particularly young people. Young people are impacted directly through youth homelessness, high rents, a shortage of student accommodation and being unable to get a foot in the housing market. 8,132 adults and children were homeless in July, up from 8,014 in June, 2,129 children are without a home. We know that 53% of all homeless families are lone parents and their children.

We need to prevent young people from becoming homeless in the first place. The Government must give tenants greater security so young people can plan for their future. If young people become homeless the services and emergency accommodation, they receive must be designed to meet their specific needs. Young LGBTQ+ people are at higher risk of homelessness across the world. Homeless services should be LGBTQ+ – friendly and staff should be trained to respond to specific needs. The Government must guarantee that all young people leaving State Care have a secure home.

#### **Recommendation**

Establish a €100m dedicated Youth Homeless Strategy financed from a vacant homes tax and a stricter vacant sites system which would also free up critical supply of homes and land

#### Climate

A political system that would seek to ignore the massive marches and gatherings by teenagers seeking change on climate policy would be tone deaf in the extreme. Young people in an unmediated way have taken up the issue in the belief that adults have failed them. Most of all the teen led climate protests have drawn attention to the fact that all the research and facts are there as indeed are the projections, what is needed is action.

In Ireland's case our contribution to what is needed globally is even more important as we are almost bottom of the EU table in this area and these targets are the minimum needed in the immediate future. Individuals will have to be open to change in all walks of life to meet the climate challenge, but Governments need to take the lead. The key areas that need attention are energy use, transport, and agriculture.

## **Recommendations**

An enhanced carbon tax with a rebate scheme for lower incomes and a surplus to fund critical climate change measures such as;

Levy on single use coffee cups

Abolish VAT exemption on airline fuel

Fast track Ireland's move towards being a renewable energy leader particularly in the field of wind. Enhance storage capacity, interconnections and diversity in renewables to ensure grid security

Make public transport free for under 25s to embed the habit

Begin planning for more LUAS lines in Dublin and other cities using funds from the above, the capital fund, PPP's and the EIB

Set a cap on emissions from agriculture which would enable achievement of Paris commitment outcomes

## Youth Services

Youth Services were cut at nearly 6 times the rate of public expenditure during the recession. We find this unacceptable. Such cuts now need to be reversed as the youth sector have contributed way more to recent adjustments than other areas of public expenditure without any policy basis. There is now a much firmer base of oversight, management and governance of these projects. Increased funding for youth services in last year's budget are welcome and the trend needs to continue to undo the damage of the past. Youth Services in Ireland are co-financed by the National Lottery, the contract between lottery players and good causes must remain. If the exchequer is cutting matching funds by greater amounts, then such a contract is threatened.

Ireland's young population is growing all the time – we will have over 1 million people aged under 24 by the year 2025, a full fifth of our population. Over eight years to 2014, youth work funding from DCYA was cut to €49.8m or a decrease of 31.8%. While there has been an increase in funding since 2014, notably in 2017, overall funding for youth work stands at 9% less than provided in 2008 when there were fewer young people to support and costs were lower.

## **Recommendation**

We echo the call of the National Youth Council of Ireland to increase funding to youth work by €10m in 2020 to bring the sector back to pre-recession levels.

## Mental and Physical Health

The mental and physical health challenges that children and young people face are immense. We have a major problem with obesity illustrated in the Growing up in Ireland Survey. Our Substance Misuse Strategy still needs major support and action. The vision for change document has been poorly resourced for years and more support is needed for child and adolescent mental health teams.

## **Recommendation**

We repeat our calls in previous submissions here;

Implement the National Substance Misuse Strategy (€14m)

Deliver on the various guidelines on diet and exercise for young people through schools and voluntary youth services for example those recommended by Safe Food Ireland (€2m)

Halve CAMHs waiting lists (€10m)

Establish a fund for community-based sports and leisure activity for young people (€8m)

Use extra Excise duty from minimum pricing to fund the above and other measures in this submission and other expert reports (+€60m)

### Education and Training

Whether in Boom or Bust Ireland has a deep-seated problem relating to educational disadvantage. Early school leaving remains an issue in many disadvantaged areas. The performance of children on key indicators under the PISA system is significantly less in DEIS schools despite some improvement. Non-attendance measured by Tusla (formerly the NEWB) is still high. We are still a way off the generally accepted school completion rates to senior cycle. Curriculum reform at the senior level needs to be a greater priority. Data in this area and the related area of vocational education and training is weak since the ESRI's School Leavers Survey was effectively defunded. We are also now facing into a review of our senior cycles

### **Recommendations**

Deliver on the Junior Cycle Student Award (no cost)

Introduce similar reform for the Leaving Certificate (no cost)

Reintroduce the Early School Leavers Survey (€0.5m)

Increase support for literacy and numeracy work in schools and voluntary youth services (€5m)

Increase support for voluntary youth services who work with early school leavers and the hardest to reach young people, support certified learning in these informal settings (€8m)

### **Incomes Measures**

There are several measures which could on a discrete basis fund the changes we wish to see here on health, education and youth services. The most obvious related changes would be to excise duties and online gambling taxes consistent with Government policy an expert opinion in these areas. With an increased emphasis on climate in budgetary thinking we also advocate a carbon tax increase. As change in Corporation Tax seems certain in the future some type of minimum effective rate now seems overdue. We have set out the self-funding of the environmental and housing measures.