



Delivering an equal and inclusive budget

SVP's Proposals for Budget 2025 and the next Programme for Government

July 2024



Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Mission Statement

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) actively supports individuals facing poverty and disadvantage by:

Promoting self-sufficiency

It is not enough to provide short-term material support. Those we assist are also helped to achieve self-sufficiency in the longer term and the sense of self-worth this provides. When problems are beyond our competence, we enlist the support of specialised help.

Support and friendship

Through person-to-person contact, we are committed to respecting the dignity of those we assist and fostering self-respect. We always assure confidentiality and endeavour to establish relationships based on trust and friendship.

Working for social justice

We are committed to identifying the root causes of poverty and social exclusion in Ireland and, in solidarity with people experiencing poverty and disadvantage, to advocate and work for the changes required to create a more just and caring society.



Society of St.Vincent de Paul

Contents

Foreword by SVP National President Rose McGowan	4
Introduction	5
SVP Vision for 2030	6
Why We Work for Social Justice	7
Summary of key recommendations for Budget 2025	8
Summary of key recommendations for next Government	9

Section 1:

Income and employment	10
Context	10
The reality of income inadequacy	10
Budget 2025 recommendations	11
Long term vision – next Programme for Government	11

Section 2:

Housing and homelessness	12
Context	12
The reality of housing insecurity	12
Budget 2025 recommendations	13
Long term vision – next Programme for Government	13

Section 3:

Education including early years	14
Context	14
The reality of educational inequality	14
Budget 2025 recommendations	15
Long term vision – next Programme for Government	15

Section 4:

Energy and Climate Justice	16
Context	16
The reality of energy poverty	16
Budget 2025 recommendations	17
Long term vision – next Programme for Government	17

Section 5:

Disability and supports for children with additional needs	18
Context	18
The reality of the cost of disability	18
Budget 2025 recommendations	19
Long term vision – next Programme for Government	19

Footnote references	20
---------------------	----

Notes	21
-------	----

Foreword

SVP National President

Rose McGowan



The last year proved to have been one of our busiest – with a quarter of a million calls for support with the cost of basics and essentials. It was another year marked by spiralling housing and food costs, and sky high energy bills. The impact is felt most acutely by those on the lowest incomes including those in low paid work.

The worst of the crisis may be behind most of us, but for people in poverty the daily struggle continues. We know parents are put under pressure all year round and will cut down on their own need for food to make sure their children can eat. Our members have met older people who go to bed early to stay warm during the colder months. People are constantly juggling rent, utility bills, school charges and supplies for their children, transport costs and food shopping. We are meeting more people who are working on low pay and their rents are rising. Low incomes combined with unaffordable and inaccessible services are keeping far too many people in poverty.

While these are significant challenges, we know with the right policies Government can make a difference. We use SVP's voice and analysis to call for much needed changes. In 2023, the National Social Justice Committee and social justice team achieved a number of successes in our advocacy efforts. Free schoolbooks at junior cycle, expansion of SUSI to part-time students, the reintroduction of Child Benefit for school students over 18 and investment in supports in early years services for children experiencing disadvantage were all key measures secured in Budget 2024. However, there is still a lot more that needs to be done to break the cycle of poverty.

This is the last budget of the current Government and therefore it is an opportunity to leave a lasting, positive legacy on Irish Society. It is important for everyone that the progress in Budget 2024 is built on and that Government delivers an equal and inclusive Budget. Our vision is that every child and adult in Ireland can live free of poverty, are able to meet their basic needs and can fulfil their potential. With the right policy and Budget decisions this is possible.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rose McGowan".

Rose McGowan
SVP National President

Introduction

In 2023, over a quarter of a million calls and requests were received through SVP's regional offices and local Conferences. Food and utility bills made up most requests but many more were in touch because of back-to-school costs, additional educational needs, third level costs, household goods, furniture, clothing, support with health-related costs, issues with mortgages and rent or funeral expenses. Almost 30,000 people reached out to SVP for the first time, many of whom are working in low paid jobs unable to make ends meet.

But is there hope on the horizon? According to the latest data from the Central Statistics Office, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose by 2.6% between May 2023 and May 2024 with the rate of inflation slowing month on month in the past seven months. We have also seen energy suppliers cut prices, however prices are nowhere near the level they were at prior to the energy crisis.

The cost-of-living crisis continues for people in poverty – low pay, lack of adequate income supports, rising housing costs and homelessness, deprivation among refugees and asylum seekers, unaffordable childcare and lack of transport are just some of the challenges people are facing.

This year's Pre-Budget Submission focuses on the key areas that we believe will have the biggest impact on the lives of people experiencing poverty, social exclusion, and lost potential. This is the final Budget of the current Government which has faced a pandemic, cost of living crisis, ongoing housing crisis, war in Europe, and an increase in those seeking protection here in Ireland. In an increasingly divisive world, Government must offer hope and show leadership based on the values of human dignity, social justice, equality and the collective good of society. These values must carry through Budget 2025 and into the next Programme for Government.

Almost 30,000 people reached out to SVP for the first time, many of whom are working in low paid jobs unable to make ends meet.

SVP Vision for 2030:

An Ireland where everyone can live a life free of poverty and is guaranteed an adequate income and access to all the services they need to thrive.

We call on the next Government to:

- Enact a Poverty Act making Government targets legally binding and place poverty proofing of all Government policy on a statutory basis.

- Introduce socio-economic status as a ground in Equality legislation.

- Retain the Child Poverty and Well-Being Office and create a dedicated ringfenced children's budget.

Why We Work for Social Justice

Povertyⁱ

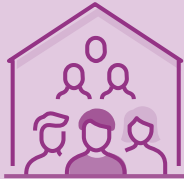


913,000 people
going without basics.

One in five children

in the state is now living in enforced deprivation.

Housingⁱⁱ



Over 13,500 people
living in emergency accommodation.

More than 4,000 children

without a home.

Education



'Voluntary' contribution requests between
€30 and €550.ⁱⁱⁱ

Average cost of going to college including rent is

€11,766.^{iv}

Income



37% of households
don't have any money left to save.^v

€48

gap between core social welfare rates and the cost of an MESL.^{vi}

Energy^{vii}



Households unable to afford adequate heat
doubles from 2021 to 2023.

546,000

went without heating in 2023 due to cost.

SVP experiences^{viii}

A quarter of a million
calls to SVP.



€40 million
spent on direct assistance to households.



Expenditure on support with utilities
almost doubled in one year.



Summary of Key Recommendations for Budget 2025

Income and employment



1. Increase core social welfare rates by €20.
2. Raise payments to the poorest children by €6 (under 12) and €15 (over 12).
3. Address in-work poverty by increasing earning disregards for lone parents to €205.
4. Make childcare affordable by increasing the lowest subsidy and threshold for the NCS.

Housing and homelessness



1. Build 20,000 social homes and bring 1,000 vacant council homes back into use.
2. Provide every child in homelessness access to a support worker.
3. Increase funding to address the housing needs of refugees and asylum seekers.

Education including early years



1. Provide an additional €10 million for the new Equal Start model in early years.
2. Extend free books to senior cycle and increase the capitation grant by 30%.
3. Increase the SUSI grant and thresholds by 15%.
4. Expand the Cost of Education Allowance and increase the rate.

Energy and climate justice



1. Increase the weekly rate of the Fuel Allowance by €7 in line with energy price increases.
2. Expand the Fuel Allowance to low income working families.
3. Pilot a new Community Energy Advice service.

Disability and supports for children with additional needs



1. Introduce a new cost of disability payment starting at €40 per week.
2. Increase the provision in-school therapy posts by 80.
3. Provide an additional 100 National Educational Psychology Service psychologists posts.

Summary of Key Recommendations for next Government

Ambition on ending poverty

1. Enact a Poverty Act to make targets and poverty proofing legally binding.
2. Introduce socio-economic status as a ground in Equality legislation.
3. Retain the Child Poverty and Well-Being Unit and create a ringfenced Children's Budget.

Income and employment

1. Set up a Social Welfare Commission to recommend annual increases and benchmark social welfare rates to a Minimum Essential Standard of Living.
2. Establish a statutory system of child maintenance and remove from Family Courts.
3. Commit to a public model of Early Years Education and Care and appoint a junior minister for Early Years.

Housing and homelessness

1. Increase the size of social and cost-rental housing to 20% of all housing stock.
2. Place homeless prevention on a statutory footing and ringfence funding to Local Authorities.
3. Establish a Migration Agency dealing with all International Protection matters.

Education

1. Expand and effectively resource the Equal Start model for early years.
2. Commit to a full funding review of schools to deliver genuinely free education.
3. Review and reform SUSI to make it fit for purpose.

Energy and climate justice

1. Set a new target to reduce energy poverty and develop a strategy on a statutory footing.
2. Incorporate private rented tenants into retrofitting plans with a focus on HAP tenants.
3. Mainstream and resource a national community energy advice service.

Disability and supports for children with additional needs

1. Co-produce a new system of disability payments with Disabled Persons.
2. Expand in-school therapeutic services to all primary and post-primary schools.
3. Set up a special taskforce to address waiting lists for children with additional needs.

Section 1:

Income and employment



Context

The inflation and cost of living crisis has left considerable damage in its wake as people grapple with growing debts and dwindling savings. The Government supports helped people in the short term and cushioned the worst effects, but there is great reason to be concerned that the temporary nature of payments will lead to significant income shocks if the social protection system is not insulated against the high cost of living on a permanent basis.

The latest data from the Vincentian MESL Research Centre shows that 71 household cases included in their analysis are in income inadequacy and 92 in deep income inadequacy. While the situation has improved from 2023 when 127 of cases represented deep income inadequacy, it is higher than 2020 when 82 cases were in deep inadequacy.¹ Single adult households and one parent families, especially those with older children, are the groups that consistently experience the greatest levels of income inadequacy. Currently, social welfare supports only meet 62% of the minimum needs of older children, compared to 87% of primary school age children's minimum needs.²

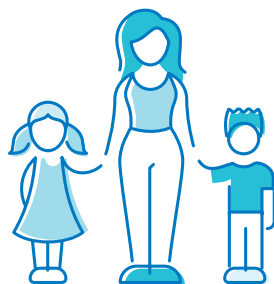
This Budget is an opportunity to recognise the ongoing pressure of the high cost of living on low and fixed income households and restore the purchasing power of payments to 2020 levels on a permanent basis and make progress on adequacy especially for older children. This is the right thing to do, it limits the damaging impact of ongoing deprivation on people and gives households more certainty to plan for the future.

Adequate social protection must go hand in hand with pathways to good jobs for those who can work. At present, however, employment is not always a route out of poverty and SVP is increasingly supporting working households who cannot afford to put food on the table or heat their homes. Lone parents who have difficulty finding affordable childcare and who are worried about losing benefits are caught in a poverty trap and too many need to regularly rely on SVP for support to get through the month.

The reality of income inadequacy

Our Members see the added mental load and difficulties of those parenting alone in financial hardship. The cost of living gives no room to put something by, when there can be less than €10 left at the end of the week.

"I am a full time working single mother, barely surviving at the moment."



1 Vincentian MESL Research Centre (2024) MESL Annual Update <https://www.budgeting.ie/publications/mesl-2024/>

2 Ibid

Budget 2025 recommendations

1. Give people stability and certainty by increasing core rates of social protection by €20 to restore the purchasing power of the payment to 2020 levels and improve the adequacy of the payment based on MESL data.

Estimated cost for working age payments: €747.6 million.³

2. Payments for children continue to be inadequate for younger and older children and the differential in recognition of the extra costs of teenagers has been eroded in recent years. To make progress on reducing child poverty, we need to see an additional €6 on the IQC for younger children and €15 for older children.

Estimated cost: €138.9 million.⁴

3. Support lone parents in work by extending Jobseekers Transition Payment up until their child is 18 or has finished school and increase the earning disregard to **€205** to reflect recent increases in the National Minimum Wage (NMW).⁵

4. Increase the targeted subsidy and lowest income threshold for the National Childcare Scheme to reduce the cost of childcare for low income families and to ensure they can continue to access to scheme when the NMW increases.

Long term vision – next Programme for Government

Our vision for 2030:

Everyone has an income that meets their basic needs and allows them to live with dignity.

1. Social welfare payments should be separated from the annual budgetary cycle and instead set on a multi-annual trajectory as part of the remit of new Social Welfare Commission with a goal of moving towards adequacy based on a Minimum Essential Standard of Living.
2. Establish a statutory child maintenance system to help address child poverty and remove the issue of child maintenance from the adversarial family court system which contributes to poverty among children in one parent families.
3. Commit to a publicly funded model of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), ensuring free access for all low-income households and appoint a Junior Minister for ECEC, within the Department of Education.

³ Department of Public Expenditure (2023) Budget 2024 Expenditure Report, page 142 social protection estimates.

⁴ <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2024-05-29a.284>

⁵ In 2020, the earning disregard of €165 allowed for 16 hours of work at the NMW to be disregard, currently this rate only covers 13 hours of NMW employment. Increasing it to 205 would restore the value in terms of hours worked.

Section 2:

Housing and homelessness



Context

Year on year SVP has seen the ongoing impact of the housing crisis on individuals and families; those in emergency accommodation, families doubling up and living in overcrowded housing, couch surfing and those living in sub-standard and poor quality housing. The reliance on the private sector to meet social housing need leaves people in a state of limbo and constant stress. Social housing gives people the foundation to build a good life and is a key component to the common good of society. Increasing targets for the building of social and cost rental housing on State land and bringing more vacant stock back into use must be a central focus on this Budget and the next Programme for Government.

It is a national shame that we now have record numbers of children growing up without a home. The long-term impacts of the trauma of homelessness should not be underestimated

- low self-esteem, lack of sleep due to overcrowding, missing developmental milestones and falling behind in school are just some of the issues SVP encounter when supporting families in homelessness. While the best solution is to prevent children from the harm of homelessness in the first place, the current reality is there is a clear need for Child and Family Support Workers to give them the help and support they need while in emergency accommodation. In the longer term we want to see a dedicated homeless prevention budget at local authority level, and legislation to place homeless prevention on a statutory footing.



We remain hopeful that Government can turn the tide on the housing crisis even with the additional challenge of meeting the needs of refugees and asylum seekers. Strong leadership, resources and cross Governmental and interagency working is key to delivering a long-term resolution to the housing crisis. We strengthen our calls for investment in communities and services that support the well-being of everyone regardless of where they are from and where all human rights are respected. A Migration Agency in Department of An Taoiseach which oversees the coordination of supports across Government departments is needed in the long term to ensure Ireland can meet the challenge and opportunity of immigration with fairness, compassion, and dignity.

The reality of housing insecurity

SVP sees how change in life circumstances for many on low incomes often brings about turbulence to their housing. Changes such as the landlord selling, rent arrears due to changes to employment, redundancy, illness, end of relationships, domestic violence, birth of a new baby or the loss of a loved one all make the circumstances complicated and the threat of homelessness a reality. A lack of homeless prevention supports and limited supply of social and affordable housing creates a crisis on top of a crisis for far too many individuals and families.

"I'm on a mattress on my parents living room with my child. I'm just ready to cry."

Budget 2025 recommendations

1. Build 20,000 social and affordable cost rental homes on state owned land in 2025 and bring back into use 1,000 void units for re-letting to households on the social housing waiting list and in emergency accommodation.

Investment for Budget 2025: €500 million

2. Provide every child living in homeless accommodation, or at risk of homelessness access to a dedicated child and family support worker.

Estimated cost: €1.5 million

3. Provide capital funding to address the long-term accommodation needs for those in direct provision with status to remain and sufficient funding to provide shelter for all asylum seekers in state funded reception centres.

Investment for Budget 2025: €250 million.

Long term vision – next Programme for Government

Our vision for 2030:

Ensuring everyone has access to secure and affordable homes, within sustainable and resourced communities.

1. Increase the provision of social housing stock and affordable cost rental homes for low-income households to represent 20% of total housing stock in line with the Housing Commission recommendation. Develop a comprehensive approach to ensure that targets are reached and based on the actual number of households affected by housing exclusion.
2. Introduce a dedicated homeless prevention budget including the provision for a prevention support worker in each Local Authority and a Rent Arrears fund to support private tenancies experiencing financial difficulty and develop legislation to place homeless prevention on a statutory footing.
3. Establish a Migration Agency in the Department of An Taoiseach dealing with all International Protection matters. As part of this remit, create a taskforce under the responsibility of the Department of Housing, to ensure the need of refugees and asylum seekers are reflected in long-term housing and services planning.

Section 3:

Education including early years



Context

SVP believes that free education should mean free education, and this is what our constitution is supposed to guarantee. Noteworthy progress has been made in recent budgets to address the cost of education for families. The provision of free schoolbooks at primary school resulted in a 20% drop in calls to our offices at back-to-school time and we expect to see a similar result this Autumn as free books are provided at junior cert cycle. This illustrates that with the right policies and the political will, an immediate impact can be felt by children, parents and schools.

While we can all be proud of the progress to date, the current underfunded education system still forces schools to make difficult choices about the education they can provide, and it forces parents to fill in the gap. This position of power and the powerless and level of underfunding does not address the educational needs of children and families experiencing disadvantage; it tells parents, children, and young people that there is an acceptable level of inequality in our education system. Our government can change this and create a fairer education system that protects children and young people by giving them a truly free education.

We want all children and young people to have positive experiences in school, knowing that education is crucial in breaking the cycle of poverty and provides a better quality of life to individual people and our whole society now and in the future.

SVP recognises the SUSI grant as an important support to students throughout their time in college. The average cost of attending higher education for undergraduates is €11,766⁶ for

the full academic year. An evaluation of our education bursary scheme of the academic year 22/23 showed that 68% of students who received support were in receipt of the SUSI grant demonstrating clear inadequacies which makes the scheme not fully fit for purpose and leaving potential graduates without what they need to achieve. In 2023, 5,552 students participating in further and higher education contacted SVP local Conferences requesting help with general living expenses and costs directly related to education.

When someone from a disadvantaged background gets a place in college or they return to education in the community, financial barriers should not be put in their way. Our education system should ensure the absolute best outcomes for everyone by uplifting those who have lived with financial disadvantage.

The reality of educational inequality

Meeting parents in their homes SVP can see how the provision of free schoolbooks is making a positive difference, but requests for 'voluntary' contributions are still coming to families and for those with older children the costs are too much to bear.

"I have 3 children in 2 secondary schools, and I have had to delay payments for the car and opted not to attend the hospital for wrist injury as it would cost €120 to be seen."

6 Zurich (2023) The Cost of College Education in Ireland 2023 <https://www.zurich.ie/savings-and-investments/education-costs/college/>

Budget 2025 recommendations

1. Provide an additional **€10 million** to continue the roll out of the Equal Start Model in early years settings prioritising parental and child supports.

2. Introducing free schoolbooks and classroom resources for senior cycle including support with mock fees for low-income families and increase the capitation grant by 30% to reduce the need for parental contributions.
Estimated cost of books: €47.5 million⁷ and increase in capitation grant: €65 million.

3. Increase the SUSI grants by 15% to reflect cost of living.
Estimated cost: €12.6 million

Long term vision – next Programme for Government

Our vision for 2030:

An adequately funded education system promoting participation and inclusion for all, that uplifts those living in financial disadvantage.

1. Commit to enhancing and resourcing effectively the Equal Start model for early years to ensure every child gets the best start in life.

2. Give every child and young person what they need to access and thrive in their school day by removing the cost of education entirely on families. Conduct an independent review of the education funding structure for schools and review the actual cost of running all different school types, commit to redesign based on meeting the cost of the school day so that they can thrive in a genuinely free system.⁸

3. Make learning in third level and community education possible by developing an independent review and consultation of the true cost, funding structure and process of further and higher education.⁹

7 Based on cost per head for free books at junior cycle of €68 million and an estimated 149,000 students at senior cycle. Capatiation grant estimate based on Budget 2024 data: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2024-06-26a.156&s=capitation+grant#g158.r>

8 Independent review should include - complete removal and regulation of parental payments to schools, regulation of uniform costs, remove all costs of state examination including mocks, funding in ICT for devices for students living in poverty, access to the Gaeltacht for low-income families, funding for low-income students to support access to extra-curricular activities, and fully fund transition year costs.

9 Independent review should include – student contribution charge, SUSI income thresholds and holiday earnings cap, adjacent distance to 24km, support for those in direct provision to access SUSI, increase grant in line with the cost of living, review SUSI guidelines for repeat students and abolish cost of resitting exams and replace with a loan scheme.

Section 4:

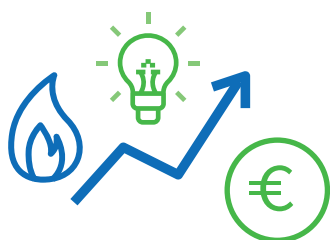
Energy and Climate Justice



Context

Recent years have seen the assistance we give with energy increase significantly due to the energy crisis and persistence of energy poverty. In 2021, we provided €4.2 million in support to households struggling with energy costs, this increased to €7.1 million in 2022. This level of support is reflected in our requests for assistance: between 2021 and the end of 2023, calls for help with energy have increased by 68%.

The Vincentian MESL Research Centre at SVP has recently conducted research into the cost of heating homes to an adequate level at different BER levels.¹⁰ This showed the depth of energy poverty experienced by low income households and the impact of improving the energy efficiency of their homes.¹¹ The recent analysis shows there are significant energy cost savings made at each BER improvement, but the overall pattern is due to inadequate income, because even in A rated homes, they do not have enough to cover the minimum energy needs. This highlights the need to focus on adequate income supports, such as the Fuel Allowance and core social welfare rates, alongside improvements in energy efficiency – only in combination will energy poverty be alleviated.



Currently, people in energy poverty do not have a clear point of support that understands that housing standards, income issues, and energy retail issues are interconnected, and can tackle them together. A wraparound advice service that spans these issues, with expertise in the energy market, as well as addressing housing standards and accessing supports for retrofitting is needed. This service should be locally based and person-centred and help people to navigate out of energy poverty as well as benefit from the energy transition.

Every extra Kilowatt needed to heat the home to a decent standard means a disproportionate financial burden for that household, and at a societal level it exacerbates inequality. We need to ensure our current support is adequate until our long-term plans can reach everyone.

The reality of energy poverty

Managing the weight of arrears for bill pay customers and keeping people topped up on their prepay meters are two of the big energy requests we receive. John got in touch with SVP this year, he has been supporting his father at home who has a long term illness and keeping the heating on is important to them both. The colder weather has gone on for longer this year which means the meter needs feeding more often, the worry of the meter running down even in early summer is a new reality for him. This has a financial impact on all the other necessities they need.

"I'm just afraid of being without gas."

¹⁰ Vincentian MESL Research Centre (2023) The cost of adequately heating the home https://www.budgeting.ie/download/pdf/the_cost_of_adequately_heating_the_home.pdf

¹¹ This research was published in November 2023, based on March 2023 prices.

Budget 2025 recommendations

1. Increase the weekly rate of the Fuel Allowance by €7 to €40 to better support households to access the energy they need.

Estimated cost: €64.6 million

2. Expand Fuel Allowance to families in receipt of the WFP to support over 100,000 children at risk of energy poverty.

Estimated cost of extending to WFP recipients: €41.4 million.¹²

3. Pilot a community energy advice service to provide tailored face-to-face support to people living in energy poverty. This is an investment in a just transition and will help to alleviate energy poverty.

Investment for Budget 2025: €5 million

Long term vision – next Programme for Government

Our vision for 2030:

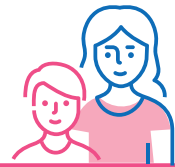
Everyone in Ireland should have access to enough clean, affordable energy to stay warm and well at home.

1. Set a new ambitious target for energy poverty and develop a strategy on a statutory footing with focussed actions for groups at highest risk of energy deprivation.
2. Incorporate private rented sector tenants into energy poverty retrofitting plans with a focus on HAP tenancies. This must include progress on energy efficiency standards in the sector and an extension of retrofitting grants to households in receipt of the Housing Assistance Payment.
3. Mainstream and resource a community energy advice service in every local authority.

¹² Based on an estimated 44,000 recipients excluding approx. 3500 OFP recipients receiving WFP and Fuel Allowance. Costing based on 2024 rate of Fuel Allowance at 28 weeks.

Section 5:

Disability and supports for children with additional needs



Context

SVP Members witness the social injustice people with disabilities face when living in poverty and social exclusion. A significant amount of the households we support are either headed by someone with a disability, or have a disabled family member, and so this is a very important issue to SVP members. Too often we meet households with a disabled family member who cannot afford food or heating, who prioritise their children's wellbeing at the expense of their own health, or who are forced into financial hardship because of costs associated with their disability, such as dietary needs, regular transport to appointments, or higher energy or technology requirements at home.

Research shows the net additional costs required to enable a socially acceptable MESL for a household caring for a child with a profound intellectual disability ranges from €207 to €308 per week.¹³ If the cost of disability and caring for a loved one was included in the social welfare system it would support them and prevent them experiencing higher rates of poverty and deprivation.

As waiting lists for assessments and supports for children with additional needs grow, increasingly SVP is asked to financially support private assessments. In a survey of SVP Conferences (402 respondents) carried out in May 2024 we found that 55% of respondents had received a request from families to support with the financial costs of private assessment. The number of requests in the past

2 years Conferences received was between one and twelve requests with an average of four requests being reported. Of those who provided support (n=143), 51% had spent up to €1,000 on direct support to families, 24% spent between €1,000 and €3,000 on support and 12% spent between €3,000 and €7,000 on support. The findings show a huge gap in state service provision for children which has created significant stress for families and as a consequence SVP Members step in to meet the need. Investment in these vital services would ensure children have their care needs met in school and in the community without being placed on long waiting lists for years.

The reality of the cost of disability

We listened to a mother of two kids, both of whom have additional needs. The family's medical card did not cover the cost of therapy.

"Finding a job that fitted around childcare has made a big difference to us because the social welfare just didn't keep us going"

but it was a difficult time financially, and while she wanted to get her children the therapy they needed, the cost to privately pay for the therapy too much.

13 VPSJ (2022) Care at Home: Costs of Care Arising from Disability <http://www.budgeting.ie/download/pdf/care-at-home-costs-of-care-arising-from-disability-2022.pdf>

Budget 2025 recommendations

1. Introduce a new cost of disability payment of at least €40 per week to those who receive a disability-related payment.
Estimated cost: €615 million.¹⁴

2. Increase the provision of the National Council Special Education in-school therapy posts by 80 as part of the new Educational Therapy Support Service.
Estimated cost: €4.5 million.¹⁵

3. Provide funding for 100 additional NEPS psychologist posts to directly meet the requirement for educational assessments.
Estimated cost: €7.5 million¹⁶

Long term vision – next Programme for Government

Our vision for 2030:

Every adult, child or young person with a disability or additional needs has their rights recognised and upheld and the means to live with dignity, with access to support services when they need them.

1. Develop a co-produced review and reform of social protection payments with Disabled Persons Organisations and in line with the UNCRPD. This should include an additional, non-means tested payment to counter the additional costs disabled people face, and a focus on services to reduce the unacceptably high rates of poverty and deprivation amongst disabled people.

2. Expand the in-school model of therapeutic services and supports to all primary and post-primary schools.

3. Set up a special taskforce with an allocated budget to address long waiting lists for children with additional needs. This should focus on increased funding for targeted recruitment and retention measures for Children's Disability Network Teams to ensure no child is left waiting for vital supports.

14 Based on costing for Disability Allowance and Carers payments: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2024-05-29a.284>

15 Based on costings found here: <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/7e9c4-ministers-foley-and-naughton-announce-the-establishment-of-an-educational-therapy-support-service-etss/>

16 <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2024-01-17a.1615&s=NEPS+PSYCHOLOGISTS+COST#g1617.r>

References of infographic

Poverty

- i Central Statistics Office (2024) Survey of Income and Living Conditions <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silced/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilcenforceddeprivation2023/>

Housing

- ii Focus Ireland (2024) Homeless Figures <https://www.focusireland.ie/knowledge-hub/latest-figures/>

Education

- iii Society of St Vincent de Paul (2023) Closing the Gap: What is needed to end voluntary contributions https://www.svp.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Closing-the-Gap_-What-is-needed-to-end-Voluntary-Contributions_-Report-2023.pdf
- iv Zurich (2023) The Cost of College Education in Ireland 2023 <https://www.zurich.ie/savings-and-investments/education-costs/college/>

Income

- v Central Statistics Office (2024) Survey of Income and Living Conditions <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silced/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilcenforceddeprivation2023/>
- vi Vincentian MESL Research Centre (2024) MESL 2024 <https://www.budgeting.ie/publications/mesl-2024/>

Energy

- vii Central Statistics Office (2024) Survey of Income and Living Conditions <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silced/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilcenforceddeprivation2023/>

SVP experiences

- viii Society of St Vincent de Paul (2023) Financial Summary 2022 <https://www.svp.ie/structure-finance-governance/financial-summary/>

NOTES

NOTES



Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Society of St. Vincent de Paul
National Office
SVP House,
91–92 Sean MacDermott Street,
Dublin 1, D01 WV38
Ireland

Tel: 01 884 8200
Email: info@svp.ie

www.svp.ie

Twitter: [@svp_Ireland](https://twitter.com/svp_Ireland)
Facebook: facebook.com/SVPIreland
Instagram: [@svp_ireland](https://instagram.com/svp_ireland)