

Shaping a Fairer Future: Social Justice Team Prepares for Budget 2026

As Budget 2026 looms on the horizon, the Social Justice Team has been working behind the scenes to ensure the voices of those most in need are heard loud and clear. In collaboration with the National Social Justice Committee and the Member Support team, we have grounded our annual Pre-Budget Submission in the real-life experiences of SVP members on the front line of poverty and exclusion.

Our work takes place against a backdrop of growing economic uncertainty. Clouds are gathering with the threat of US tariffs and a possible decline in Foreign Direct Investment—both of which could have a serious impact on Ireland's economy. In such times, it is essential that our social protection system remains a strong and reliable safety net for those who need it most.

The past five years have tested Ireland in extraordinary ways. We have faced once-in-a-lifetime challenges: a global pandemic and multiple lockdowns, a war in Europe for the first time in nearly a century, and the largest humanitarian crisis in recent memory, with over 112,000 Ukrainian refugees welcomed to our shores. Most recently, we have weathered a cost-of-living crisis, with inflation peaking at 9.2% and prices for energy and essential goods soaring.

The Government did respond—and with speed—but many of the supports provided were universal rather than targeted. While well-intentioned, this approach was expensive and inefficient, failing to adequately focus resources on households most at risk. As a result, we are calling for a more proactive and evidence-based social protection system—one that puts the most vulnerable first.

Our Pre-Budget Submission includes key recommendations aimed at tackling poverty and promoting inclusion. We are calling for:

- **Benchmarking of the Child Support Payment** (formerly the Increase for a Qualified Child) to ensure it meets the real cost of raising a child.
- **Improvements in income disregards and thresholds** to ensure that work always pays—particularly for part-time workers and those in low-paid jobs.
- **An increase in the Living Alone Allowance**, to better support those who are most isolated and at risk of poverty.
- **Supports for Children experiencing homelessness.**
- **Increases in the Fuel Allowance and an extension of eligibility to low income households who are working.**

We know that families with children and single adults living alone—especially older people and those living with a disability—are among the most vulnerable. Our

recommendations are designed not only to protect them, but to provide pathways out of poverty through fair and sustainable employment.

Our advocacy extends beyond the submission itself. We are actively bringing our priorities to the decision-makers:

- On **1st May**, Louise and our National President, Rose McGowan, met with Minister for Social Protection Dara Calleary and his officials.
- On **22nd May**, Louise, Marcella and Nessian Vaughan (Chair of the National Social Justice Committee) met with opposition spokesperson Louise O'Reilly TD to discuss our key asks.
- On **26th May**, Louise and Niamh joined colleagues from the National One Parent Family Alliance in a meeting with officials from the Department of Social Protection.

Looking ahead, we will launch our Pre-Budget Submission in **Buswells Hotel on Tuesday, 15th July**, times to be confirmed (consider this your initial invitation to join us), followed by participation in the **Department of Social Protection's Pre-Budget Forum on Thursday, 17th July**.

This is an important time in our calendar—a time when we can truly influence policy and make a tangible difference to the lives of people across Ireland that SVP are proud to support.
