

National Women's Council says public, non-profit childcare should be budget priority ^[1]

Council's pre-budget submission calls for further 25% cut in childcare costs to parents

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Source: The Irish Times

Format: Article

Publication Date: 5 Sep 2023

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

Excerpts

The delivery of a public, not-for-profit childcare model is the best way to increase women's equal participation in society, according to the National Women's Council.

Speaking at the publication of the council's pre-budget submission, its care officer Eilish Balfe said: "Government must commit to delivering a public model of childcare, alongside a further 25 per cent reduction in costs to parents in Budget 2024."

The Government also needs to increase social protection and pension rates to tackle gender inequality and to ensure a minimum essential standard of living, according to the submission. These accounted for two of the council's "top 10 asks", the others being funding the Government's zero tolerance strategy on violence against women; the provision of free contraception and IVF; investing in gender-sensitive mental health services; supporting women who seek justice after violence; housing for women; establishing a statutory child maintenance agency; investing in feminist climate justice and funding women's participation and leadership.

Council's director Orla O'Connor spoke about what it saw as "a really pivotal budget in terms of what's been happening over recent years".

"Budget 2024 presents an extraordinary opportunity to support women, advance gender equality, and invest in services which improve outcomes for all women and girls living in Ireland," Ms O'Connor said. "Government must prioritise the delivery of universal public services – which support the most marginalised – and avoid income tax cuts for higher earners. We have the resources. Now is the time to invest in the future – in an equal, sustainable, feminist Ireland."

...

Ms Balfe said a lack of affordable childcare was the biggest barrier to women's equal participation in society, including in the labour market.

"While the investment in last year's budget was a very welcome start, childcare costs are still unaffordable for many. International evidence shows that a public, not-for-profit, childcare model is the best way to ensure access to affordable, quality childcare for families and decent pay and conditions for workers."

Donal Swan, the council's economic equality coordinator, highlighted the importance of long-term investment.

"Reliance on one-off support measures will not protect women from poverty or tackle income and wealth inequality in the long-term. Secure, predictable, benchmarked increases in social protection that ensure a minimum standard of living for all are needed. This is essential in supporting the most marginalised groups of women in our society. We're calling for at least a €25 increase in all pension and social protection rates in Budget 2024.

Region: Europe ^[3]

Tags: feminist ^[4]

gender equality ^[5]

public funding ^[6]

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