

Towards a Scandinavian childcare system for 0-12 year olds in Ireland? ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Full report in pdf ^[2]

Excerpts from the introduction:

Speaking in the Dáil on 18 April 2012, the Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton TD, said that she would only proceed with plans to reform the One Parent Family Payment by 2014/15 if she got a “credible and bankable commitment” by the time of this year’s Budget that the Irish Government would put “a system of safe, affordable and accessible child care in place, similar to what is found in the Scandinavian countries to whose systems of social protection we aspire”. In making this commitment, Minister Burton referred to the need for “adequate child care” both for children’s safety and to enable “a parent to make the first steps back to the workplace”.

Barnardos and Start Strong have worked together to prepare this short paper that compares the current provision of childcare and after-school services in Ireland for 0-12 year olds with the Scandinavian systems to which Minister Burton referred.

Scandinavian childcare is widely regarded as being among the best in the world, and the outcomes for children and families are very positive. Educational attainment is high, child poverty rates are among the lowest in the world, and there is a high labour market participation rate among parents, including lone parents. But a Scandinavian childcare system comes at a cost – the level of Government investment in childcare in the Scandinavian countries is far higher than in Ireland.

Barnardos and Start Strong would warmly welcome a bankable Government commitment to develop a Scandinavian childcare system in Ireland. In this paper we identify the key features that this would involve and we make recommendations on initial steps that should be taken to move in this direction. However, we are under no illusions about the scale of change and additional investment that would be required. In the current economic climate, a Scandinavian childcare system is likely to remain a long-term goal, rather than a short-term prospect. The Minister’s proposal to reform the One Parent Family Payment should therefore be postponed well beyond the proposed 2014/15 timetable.

Related link: No seven-year-old should be the poster child for austerity ^[3]

Region: Europe ^[4]

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Links

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