

Affordable childcare vital if women to play full part in society ^[1]

Author: McTeirnan, Anthea

Source: The Irish Times

Format: Article

Publication Date: 20 Aug 2015

AVAILABILITY

Read online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

Affordable childcare must be made available if women are to pay a full part in public and civil life, the National Women's Council of Ireland has said.

In a letter sent to Minister for Children James Reilly, the women's council calls for the introduction of an "affordable quality childcare infrastructure" in the October budget.

Paid leave must be part of any childcare measures to reconcile work and family life, said women's council director Orla O'Connor.

The cost of childcare in Ireland remains among the highest in the EU, with many Irish parents paying more than 40 per cent of their incomes on the care, said Ms O'Connor.

Women are most affected by high costs and lack of childcare as they bear "primary responsibility for childcare in Ireland", she said.

The jobs women feel able to take up and the way their employment progresses is affected by childcare considerations, so the high cost of childcare has "a devastating impact on gender equality here", said Ms O'Connor.

"Good practice models, both in the EU and internationally, show that the inclusion of gender equality objectives within early years policies leads to better outcomes for all," she added.

Paternity leave

The Government should enable parents to take "leave from employment in the first year of a child's life", according to the women's council.

To ensure this happens "Minister Reilly and the Government must introduce two weeks paternity leave for fathers on birth of their child", said Ms O'Connor.

The women's council has also called on the Minister to announce six months of paid parental leave. This should follow on from six months of maternity leave. This new leave should be introduced over three budgets, starting with two months paid parental leave in budget 2016.

All childcare fees should also be capped at €180 a week per place in childcare for children up to the age of three, said Ms O'Connor.

The women's council has written to Dr Reilly urging the Government to introduce a subsidy so that childcare costs will be reduced for all parents. This would be done on a sliding scale, according to income, with the maximum parental contribution set at 40 per cent of childcare costs, noted the women's council.

All children should get free Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) from the age of three years until they enter primary school, the women's council wrote. The hours of ECCE should also be extended to 20 hours per week for up to 48 weeks per year, said Ms O'Connor.

These recommendations would provide "both immediate benefit and also set us on a course to provide a sustainable childcare infrastructure for both children and parents", added Ms O'Connor.

-reprinted from The Irish Times

Region: Europe ^[3]

Tags: women's labour force participation ^[4]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/15/08/affordable-childcare-vital-if-women-play-full-part-society>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/15/08/affordable-childcare-vital-if-women-play-full-part-society> ^[2]

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/affordable-childcare-vital-if-women-to-play-full-part-in-society-1.2323038> [3]
<https://childcarecanada.org/category/region/europe> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/womens-labour-force-participation>