



Roinn an Taoisigh
Department of the Taoiseach

Child Poverty and Well-Being Programme Office

30th June 2023

“Social Inclusion is achieved when people have access to sufficient income, resources and services to enable them to play an active part in their communities and participate in activities that are **considered the norm for people in society generally.**”

Roadmap for Social Inclusion
2020 – 2025, p. 11



We are not where we want to be ...



Over time, Ireland has made substantial progress in addressing child poverty and supporting well-being. Today our income supports, public services and community infrastructure all play an important role in protecting children from poverty and promoting child well-being.

However, in common with other countries children are more likely to experience poverty than adults.

Households with children also experience higher rates of both relative and absolute poverty. This holds for at-risk of poverty, deprivation and consistent poverty.

Some groups of children fair consistently poorly including those living in lone parent household, low levels of maternal education, children of migrants, minority ethnic groups, Traveller children, children with a disability.

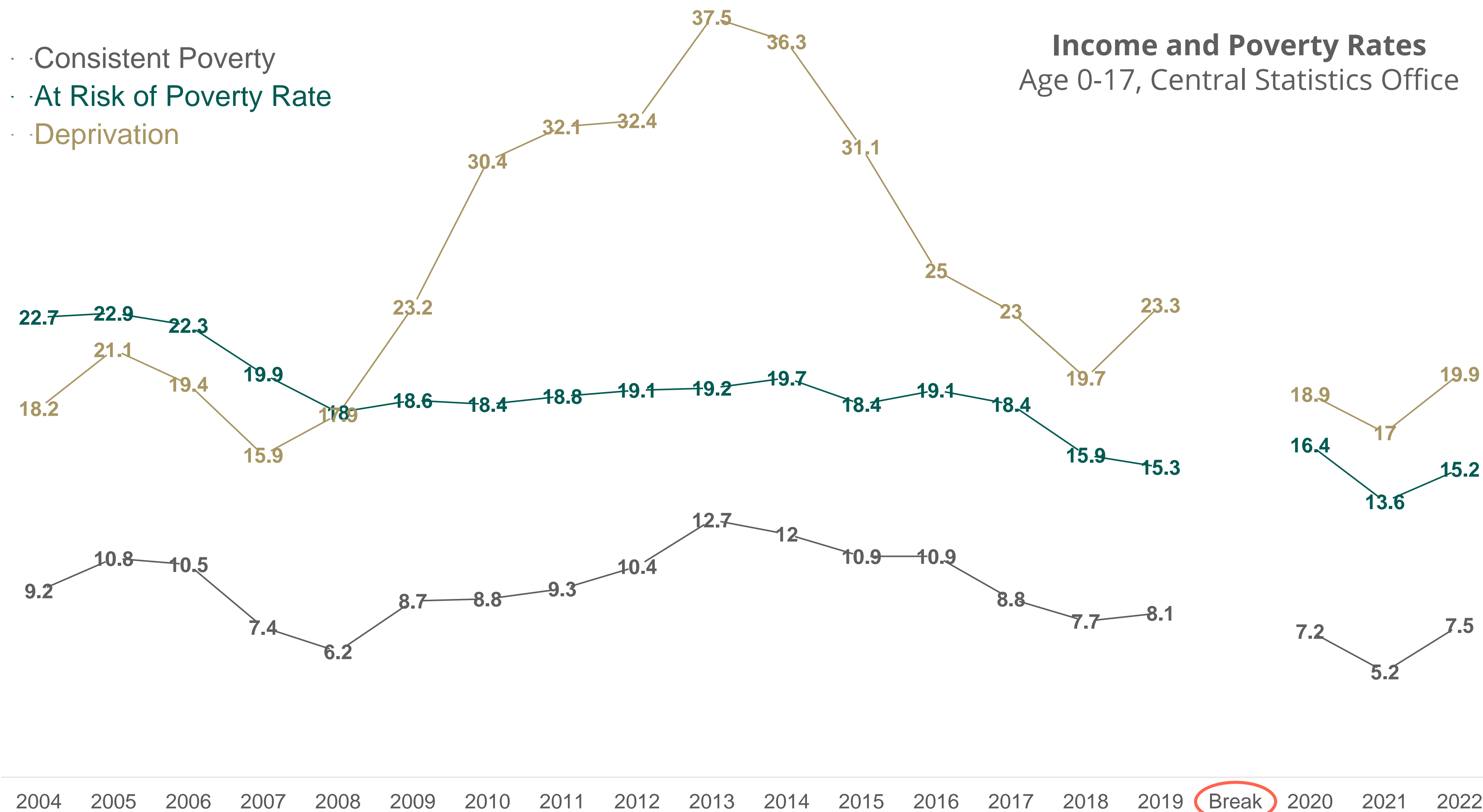
Child poverty rate had been decreasing since 2014, but 2022 (2021 data) saw an increase.



Income and Poverty Rates

Age 0-17, Central Statistics Office

- Consistent Poverty
- At Risk of Poverty Rate
- Deprivation



Poverty steals futures ...



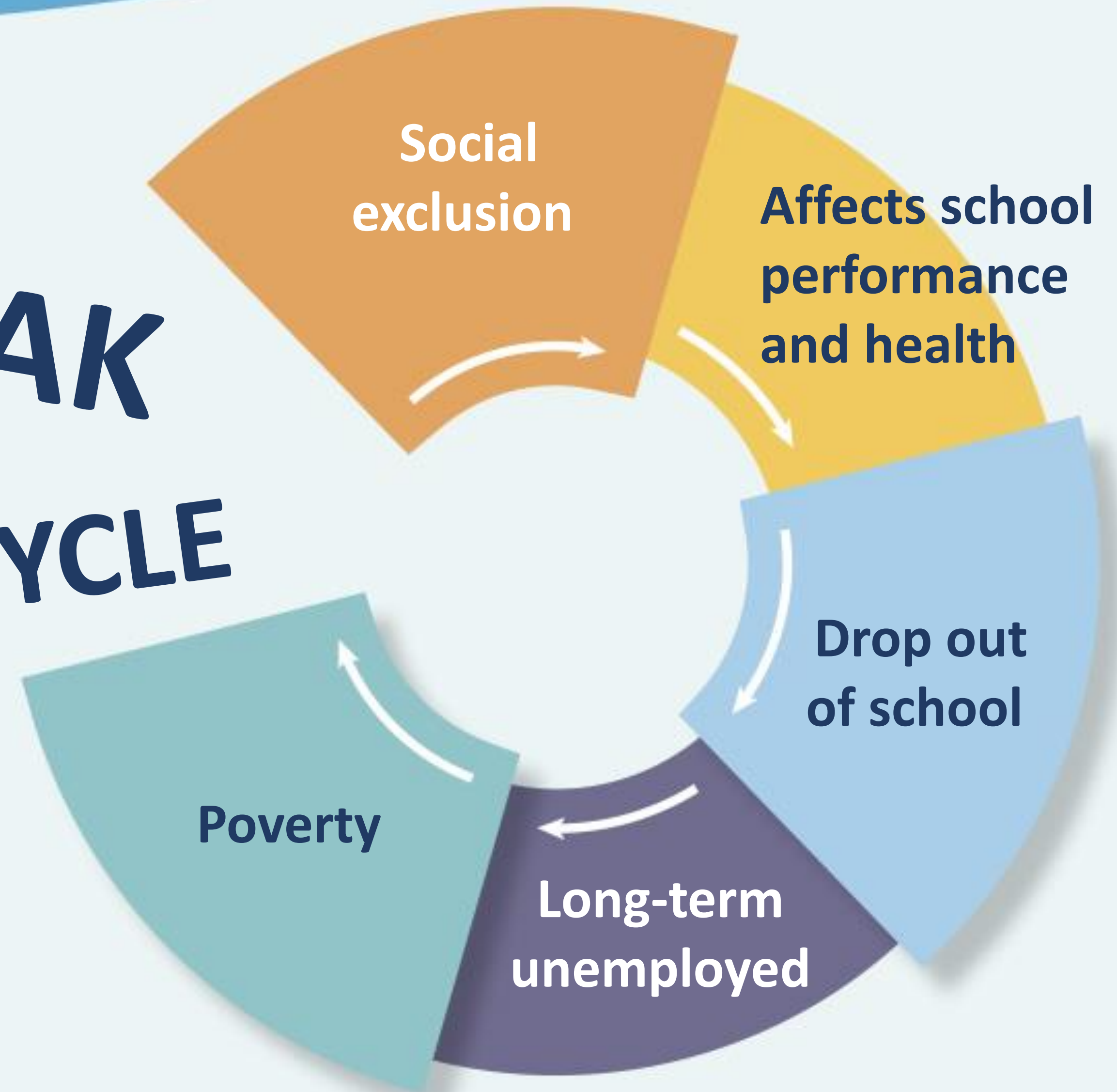
Descriptive analysis shows that exposure to EV [Economic Vulnerability] during childhood is associated with poorer outcomes at 9 years in the '08 cohort and at 17 years in the '98 cohort. These outcomes cover a range of key dimensions, including **cognitive and educational attainment, school engagement, socio-emotional development, life satisfaction, self-concept, chronic illness/disability, obesity, health behaviours (for example, smoking, drinking for the '98 cohort) and quality of relationships**. Only the closeness of the relationships with parents and pro-social behaviour were not significantly related to EV exposure. In the majority of cases, there appears to be a cumulative effect of exposure... That said, **even transitory spells of EV are associated with worse outcomes** compared to never experiencing EV.

ESRI, 2021, p. xi

European Child Guarantee

Aims to **prevent and combat social exclusion** by guaranteeing access of children in need to a set of key services, thereby also contributing to upholding the rights of the child, combatting child poverty and fostering equal opportunities.

BREAK THE CYCLE



Target group: children in need

Children under the age 18 years who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

Each Member States has been asked to identify children in need and take into account specific disadvantages experienced by:

- a) homeless children or those experiencing severe material deprivation;
- b) children with a disability;
- c) children with mental health issues;
- d) children with a migrant background or a minority ethnic origin (particularly Traveller & Roma);
- e) children being in alternative (especially institutional) care;
- f) children in precarious family situations (e.g. single-parent household, imprisoned parent or parent with a disability, mental or long-term illness, or addiction; teenage mother; exposure to violence; left-behind children of EU citizens).

European Child Guarantee

Member States should guarantee
for children in need...

...free and effective access to:



early childhood
education
and care



education and
school-based
activities



at least
one healthy
meal each
school day



healthcare

...effective access to:



healthy
nutrition



adequate
housing

Type of access to services

- **Effective and free access** - services are readily available, accessible, of good quality, provided in a timely manner, where the potential users are aware of their existence, as well as of entitlements to use them.

Ireland & the Child Guarantee

Ireland's National Action Plan (NAP) was published in June 2022

Ireland's NAP outlines current expenditure on programmes of relevance to the Child Guarantee which amounts to approximately €7.8bn each year. Highlighted programmes in our NAP include:

- a) The First Five Strategy, including doubling investment in Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School Aged Care (SAC) to at least €1bn by 2028 and introducing a new funding model, with rollout to commence in 2022;
- b) Increasing free access to General Practitioner (GP) care without charges for children;
- c) Providing funding through the School Meals Programme for the provision of food to some 1,500 schools and organisations, with DEIS schools receiving priority access;
- d) Provision of capital funding to develop further supported emergency accommodation for families and individuals experiencing homelessness through the Housing for All Strategy;

17 December 2022...



“The third part of our collective mission must be ensuring the best start in life for every child. As I outlined earlier today, our focus must be on reducing child poverty and improving wellbeing. Our vision is to make Ireland the best country in Europe to be a child.

We have to give everyone the best start in life, empowering them to make the most of that start, through education, through equal opportunities, good jobs, and a better future.

As a government, our energy and ideas will be used to improve access to therapies and provide more special needs education.

I will put in place a new unit in the Department of the Taoiseach to co-ordinate this approach working closely with Ministers O’Gorman, Foley, Humphreys, Harris and Donnelly, among others.”

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar

Aligned with emerging international practice?



Central government approach where....

- Policy is particularly complex
- Where there is no obvious 'one place' to situate the solutions
- There is a need for expert coordination
- Where an issue has been defined as an overarching priority.

OECD, 2018, p. 28

The Programme Office



Our vision is to make Ireland the best country in Europe to be a child. Poverty negatively impacts childhood and restricts children's futures.

The role of the Department of the Taoiseach is to co-ordinate and focus Government action.

The Programme Office aims to provide **strategic focus, leadership, and enhanced accountability** to action on child poverty and well-being.

This Office will focus on a select number of priority commitments and contribute to their accelerated implementation.

As of two weeks ago the Office is now fully staffed, with a team of six.

How the Office will work?



The Programme Office is driven by the assumption that an enhanced whole-of-government approach can be complemented by a sharper strategic focus and prioritisation on a limited number of issues.

The Office is preparing a Child Poverty and Well-Being Programme which will identify the policy priorities for acceleration and investment in the coming years.

Working closely with all Departments, and in particular with the DCEDIY in the context of the new National Framework, the Office will monitor the delivery of commitments by Departments and agencies to improve the well-being of children experiencing poverty.

The Programme will capture progress, gaps in implementation, and highlight important interdependencies in achieving last impact on children's lives.



Six areas of focus:



Income Supports and Joblessness	<i>The Programme Office will monitor efforts to provide supports and services to families to allow them to fully participate in society and continue reducing the level of child poverty, as well as supports for parents in accessing family-friendly employment.</i>
Early Learning and Childcare	<i>The Programme Office will monitor progress in relation to Early Learning and Care including the sufficient supply of suitable qualified personnel and the interplay between this and other supports which are critical to protecting families and children at risk of poverty</i>
Reducing the cost of education	<i>The Programme Office will monitor progress on existing commitments in relation to reducing the cost of education and supporting access to third level education for families.</i>

Six areas of focus:



Family homelessness	<i>While housing policy generally has a significant momentum and existing oversight arrangements, the Programme Office will help to provide a focus on how other measures can assist in preventing family homelessness and helping those in homeless services as they transition to more stable housing arrangements.</i>
Consolidating and integrating Family & Parental Support, Health and Well-being Services	<i>The Programme Office will work with relevant Departments and agencies to develop this networked approach, to ensure consistency of access to effective supports and to identify funding requirements and activity targets.</i>
Enhancing participation in culture, arts and sport for Children and Young People affected by poverty	<i>The Programme office will monitor progress on existing commitments in relation to culture and participants life, sports participation and efforts to tackle disadvantage in Gaeltacht areas.</i>





Roinn an Taoisigh
Department of the Taoiseach

cpw@taoiseach.gov.ie
Child Poverty and Wellbeing Unit