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## Putting Children First: CDI's Pre-Budget Submission Prioritises Ireland's Most Vulnerable

The Childhood Development Initiative (CDI) is taking a stand for Ireland's most vulnerable with its pre-budget submission, presenting five key priorities and recommendations to the Irish Government for Budget 2024.

This submission addresses critical issues affecting children's lives, including child poverty, homelessness, children with additional needs, mental health, and prevention and early intervention.

Marian Quinn, CDI's CEO emphasises the urgency of these priorities, stating, 'We are an organisation very much in touch with the children and families we work with daily. We have the distinct advantage of having expertise, knowledge, experience, research and data to back up the experience on the ground at a grassroots level. These five key priorities are screaming out for resources.'

### Child Poverty:

Disadvantaged communities face significant challenges, with **45%** of children in Tallaght residing in disadvantaged or very disadvantaged areas. **Child poverty has risen to 13.1% in 2022**, impacting over 671,000 people, including **188,602 children**. CDI urges the government to relax and expand eligibility criteria for means-tested social welfare payments, adopt percentage targets to reduce poverty among vulnerable groups, increase core social welfare payments, and ensure nutritious meals for all children.

### Homelessness:

Homelessness remains a pressing concern, affecting thousands, in particular the **3,699 children in emergency accommodation**. To address this, the government must provide adequate homework and play spaces for children in homeless services, increase Homeless HAP and HAP payments, allocate additional resources for Child and Youth Development Workers, and commit to ending child homelessness by 2030.

### Children with Additional Needs:

Long waiting times for essential services cause stress for families. It taking 4 years for a child to be seen by the Children's Disability Network Team (CNDT) is not acceptable. The government should allocate sufficient resources for Primary Care services and Children's Disability Network Teams, establish a dedicated child Public Health Nursing service, improve communication with parents, and streamline services for children with additional needs.

**Mental Health:**

Research in Tallaght by Trinity College found that up to 3,434 young people are estimated to have experienced depression. Children are experiencing increased anxiety and social stress, often due to the pandemic. To tackle this, the government must fund mental health services, prioritise children based on need through a triage system, expand school counselling services, and address gaps in GP provision.

**Prevention and Early Intervention:**

[The Area Based Childhood \(ABC\) Programme](#) plays a crucial role in reducing poverty's impact. However, there has been no funding increase since 2016, and a proposed 2% budget reduction in 2024 will add to the existing strain on ABC services. CDI calls for the budget deficit to be addressed, applying a cost-of-living increase, and ensuring a ringfenced budget for the ABC Programme.

The Childhood Development Initiative (CDI) supports the pre-budget submissions of our colleagues in the Children's Rights Alliance (CRA), the Prevention and Early Intervention Network (PEIN), the Wheel, the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS), and many other organisations who have been working to improve outcomes for children, families, and communities.

#CDIPrebudgetsubmission  
#PuttingChildrenFirst  
#IrelandsMostVulnerable

**END**

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**About CDI:**

The [Childhood Development Initiative \(CDI\)](#) works to improve outcomes for children, families and communities in Tallaght and throughout Ireland. To do this:

- We deliver evidence-informed prevention and early intervention programmes, in partnership with communities and services.
- We support the child and family workforce through professional development training and consultancies.