



Budget 2019

Crosscare Pre-Budget Submission to the  
Department of Employment Affairs and  
Social Protection on the protection of young  
unemployed adults under 26 affected by  
homelessness

July 2018

## ***The role of Crosscare***

Crosscare is the social support agency of the Dublin Archdiocese. With over 75 years' experience of working with those in vulnerable and marginalised situations. Working in the areas of youth work, homelessness, community supports and food poverty, our mission is to provide innovative and relevant services to those most in need. Crosscare's vision is of society where all people have the opportunity to fulfil their potential and our mission is to provide innovative and relevant services to those most in need regardless of their ethnicity, nationality, religion, beliefs or sexual identity. Crosscare's values are love, respect & excellence.

Crosscare is working with young adults who are accessing our Homeless services and the Information and Advocacy services. Certain groups of young adults who are unemployed and are particularly at risk are not receiving the full adult rate of Jobseeker's Allowance and are being disadvantaged as a result.

Crosscare's pre-budget submissions in 2016 and 2017 (see appendix) provided evidence based analysis on young adults adversely affected by age-related payments and suggested achievable recommendations. In both submissions and subsequent meetings with the Minister for Social Protection, Crosscare discussed the issues affecting three specific groups of young adults aged 18 to 25 namely:

- 1. Young people with International Protection who have moved out of Direct Provision and are living independently**
- 2. Young people who are unable to live with family and are living in emergency accommodation**
- 3. Young people who have left State Care to live independently who are excluded from the Aftercare Allowance**

## ***Progress 2017-2018***

Crosscare has been working with stakeholders and TUSLA to resolve the barrier against young people leaving care who had been excluded from the Aftercare Allowance. This development is welcomed and Crosscare will continue to work with stakeholders to ensure that an appropriate commitment is made to protect these young people.

However to date, job-seeking adults aged 18-25 who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness continue to face the same issues and are living in consistent poverty. The three groups identified are experiencing significant consistent poverty and are experiencing social exclusion that can have a long-term effect on their lives.

### **1. Young people with International Protection who have moved out of Direct Provision and are living independently**

These young people who have applied for International Protection in Ireland will have come through often devastating experiences and family separation. Their first introduction to life in Ireland is spent in a Direct Provision hostel and will be dependent on the hostel to provide food and facilities. Many are learning English and will go to school. When they receive their permission to remain in Ireland, they are sent on their way to fend for themselves. They do not receive any guidance or instruction on how to secure a tenancy and an income. Organisations and services can provide some support to access services and entitlements however the young people will not have support networks or family to support them emotionally or financially through this transition.

### **2. Young people who are unable to live with family and are living in emergency accommodation**

These young people have often experienced family difficulties and can no longer live with family. They tend to have little or no alternative support networks but are 'housing ready' and want to sustain an independent living. They are forced to manage on a lower rate of Jobseeker's Allowance, putting them at a further disadvantage and at risk of consistent poverty. Transition to private rented accommodation is further hampered by the ongoing housing crisis and high rents. Job-seeking supports and training opportunities remain restricted by age, availability, educational attainment and length of time on social welfare.

### **3. Young people who have left State Care to live independently who are excluded from the Aftercare Allowance**

These young people are outside of TUSLA's Care Leavers policy and the National Aftercare Allowance for young people leaving care up to the age of 21 who are in full time education or training. Young people leaving care who are not or cannot engage in full time education or training are excluded from this payment. Crosscare has advocated for full Aftercare Allowance for those who are unable to engage with education or training for reasons such as mental health needs, addiction needs, behavioural or confidence needs who were engaged with appropriate supports such as aftercare, counselling or addiction services. Care Leavers who have been in care for less than 12 months before they leave care at age 18 are also not entitled to the Aftercare Allowance and are also put at the same risk. They have also been highlighted by Crosscare as being affected adversely by this policy of exclusion. There has been no development in relation to the recommendations put forward by Crosscare and other stakeholders, and these Care Leavers continue to be referred to the local social welfare offices to apply for age-related Jobseeker's Allowance. They too face all the difficulties mentioned with sustaining a tenancy independent of family care and support.

### ***Budget changes***

Nominal changes to allowances over the past three Departmental Budgets have made little difference to the identified young people at risk. The Government's decision to 'spread the share' in

Budget 2018 by making a small increase across the weekly payments for all customers, whilst fair in theory does not result in equality for young people at risk. Increases of €2.50 and €5 weekly fail to deliver progress in relieving the adverse impact on these young people. The Minister must heed the warnings from stakeholders and representatives of young people at risk that the continued implementation of this policy is counterproductive to these young people. Such extreme policies to address labour market participation by young adults in a 'one-fits-all' approach can have a long-term negative impact on young people at risk. Research and international approaches have not yet examined the impact on vulnerable groups of young adults impacted by benefit cuts and a complete overview of the impact of these policies cannot be assessed in the absence of such data.<sup>1</sup> The Department's Social Inclusion Monitor has identified risk of consistent poverty among the 15-24 age group to be almost twice as high as that for the overall 18-64 working age group. It also shows a gradual increase for the 15-24 age group from 2010 to 2015.<sup>2</sup> This data confirms that young adults have been disproportionately affected by consistent poverty, whilst the gradual increase indicates a causal correlation with the cuts to Jobseekers Allowance for young adults.

Young adults who are, for various reasons, experiencing homelessness, or living independently and are at risk of homelessness will continue to be pushed to the fringes of society and fall through the safety-net that Ireland aims to provide.

### ***Recommendation for Budget 2019***

The Minister must review the impact of the policy on young adults at risk and make adequate provisions for them whilst they are at risk. Training and work-experience opportunities to help them move out of risk and beyond the safety-net must be first founded on the security that these young people will not be subjected to experiencing homelessness and isolation. The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion must include a commitment for young people who are unemployed and living in consistent poverty without family supports.

**For Budget 2019, Crosscare repeats its call for commitment from the Government and the Department of Social Protection to restore the safety-net and alleviate the impact of consistent poverty for the three highlighted groups of young people aged 18 to 25 by reversing the 2010 cuts to Jobseeker's Allowance.**

This year, Crosscare will be launching an online video petition campaign during the summer and will present the petition signatories to the Government in the lead up to Budget Day.

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<sup>1</sup> Aedin Doris & Donal O'Neill & Olive Sweetman, 2017. "Does Reducing Unemployment Benefits during a Recession Reduce Youth Unemployment? Evidence from a 50% cut in Unemployment Assistance," Economics, Finance and Accounting Department Working Paper Series n279-17.pdf, Department of Economics, Finance and Accounting, National University of Ireland - Maynooth.

<sup>2</sup> Social Inclusion Monitor 2015, Department of Social Protection pp42  
<https://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/SocialInclusionMonitor2015.pdf>