



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 - 2025

Ambition, Goals, Commitments



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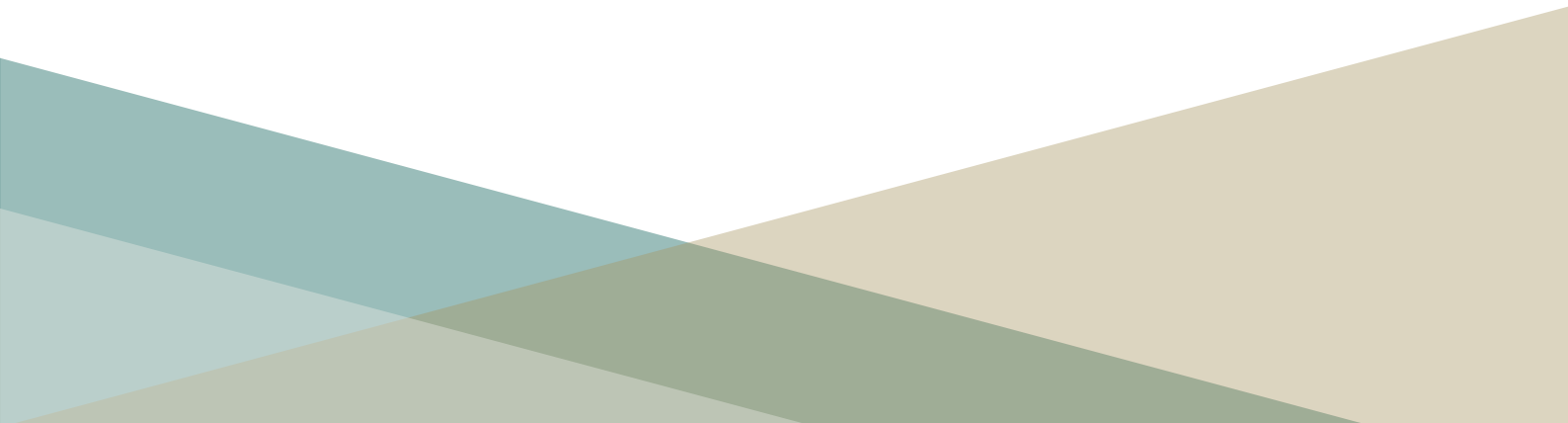
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Ambition for 2025

To reduce the national consistent poverty rate to 2% or less of the population and,

To make Ireland one of the most socially inclusive States in the EU

7 High-Level Goals

1

Extend employment opportunities to all who can work

66 Commitments, including:

Improve employment services for long-term unemployed people and marginalised groups.

2

Ensure work pays – fair pay, fair conditions for workers

Tighten enforcement of employment conditions. Continue development of the minimum wage.

3

Provide income security for older people

Benchmark pension rates to salaries and inflation. Establish a pension rates commission.

4

Support families - reduce child poverty

Prioritise increases in family related payments. Introduce and extend new family supports.

5

Reduce poverty among people with disabilities – help them to maximise their ability

Reform structure of disability related welfare payments. Enhance employment supports for people with disabilities.

6

Build inclusive communities – encourage active citizenship

Protect all-Ireland schemes and services post-Brexit. Implement National Broadband Plan.

7

Ensure that all people have access to quality services

Implement Sláintecare. Reduce food and fuel poverty.

Focused actions covering:

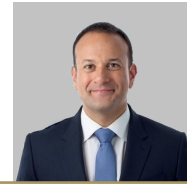
- Older people
- People outside employment
- Workers
- Families
- People with disabilities
- Communities

Driven through 66 commitments:

- Welfare rates
- Wages
- Employment creation
- Education and training
- Employment supports
- Family and early learning and care supports
- Services for people with disabilities
- Community development

Tracked against 22 Targets covering:

- Poverty (including child poverty)
- Deprivation
- Income Distribution
- Housing
- Health
- Early Learning and Care
- Social Participation/Active Citizenship



Taoiseach's Foreword

Ireland's economy and society are changing rapidly. We have made significant progress over recent years putting the country on the right track and both our economic prospects and investment in public and social services are on the rise. For these reasons, we have seen significant reductions in the rates of poverty, child poverty, deprivation and social exclusion, particularly since 2014.

We want to build on this in the coming years. Now is the time to set ourselves a new set of ambitions for the Ireland we want to see by 2025.

The Roadmap for Social Inclusion seeks to identify those challenges, which confront us, and to put in place firm actions across Government. We believe that the commitments set out in the Roadmap are realistic yet ambitious and our agenda is clear: to make Ireland one of the most socially inclusive countries in the EU over the coming five years.

To this end, the Roadmap moves away from a focus solely on incomes. It outlines specific measures and goals, which can capture progress across many aspects of social inclusion: housing, healthcare, childcare and social integration. The Roadmap aims to set us on a course for real change and delivery in those areas which matter most to our citizens and which can underpin a better quality of life for all.

Finally, this cannot and will not be simply a static document to be re-visited intermittently. Rather, our aim is to ensure that this is a living strategy and one that develops and grows over time as we come to understand what is working, and perhaps what is not. It is our firm intention to recalibrate our actions and commitments over the next five years so that we can be sure that no opportunity is wasted.

Leo Varadkar

Taoiseach

January 2020



Minister's Foreword

That we have made substantial progress in tackling poverty and social exclusion in Ireland over recent years is clear but yet questions remain. What will progress in future years look like? How will we get there? How will we drive the changes we wish to see? The Roadmap for Social Inclusion was developed after an extensive period of consultation and sets out to provide answers to these questions.

In its look and feel, the new Roadmap represents a move away from its predecessors. In the past, such strategy documents could be seen as, in effect, a detailed repetition of actions and plans across each Government Department. In this case, the document is more streamlined and is intended to provide an overarching structure for the various social inclusion and poverty reduction approaches set forth in each Department's own sectoral strategy.

It will be a five year strategy with an independent mid-term review to facilitate an evaluation of the impact of the Roadmap commitments. It will be implemented through annual action plans outlining the key actions for each year allocated to each agency/Department covering all aspects of social inclusion.

The value-added of the Roadmap lies in the provision of a framework for the activities of the various Government Departments. In the current climate, each Government Department addresses poverty reduction and social inclusion in their own strategies. The role of the Roadmap is to provide a broader framework for this work and to set the medium-term direction on a whole-of-Government basis, identifying the inter-linkages and dependencies across the various stakeholders.

The Roadmap presents 7 high-level goals, 22 targets and 66 unique commitments. The focus of the Roadmap is on building social inclusion, using an expanded approach that moves beyond the traditional focus on income poverty. This strategy reaffirms the Government's long-held commitment to reduce the national consistent poverty rate to 2% or less and to do so over the period up to 2025.

It also incorporates a variety of pan-European targets covering housing, healthcare, childcare and social integration. The Roadmap recognises that certain groups within society are at greater risk and presents cohort-specific targets for people with a disability and children.

The Roadmap commits the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to examine and develop proposals for Government to set a formal benchmark and institute a process whereby future changes in pension rates of payment are explicitly linked to changes in the consumer price index and average wages.

Finally, the Roadmap establishes a robust framework for monitoring and reporting progress that will hold Government to account and also inform the renewal of existing, and the development of future, sectoral strategies.

Regina Doherty, TD

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection

January 2020

Introduction

“People are living in poverty if their income and resources (material, cultural and social) are so inadequate as to preclude them having a standard of living which is regarded as acceptable by Irish society generally. As a result of inadequate income and resources, people may be excluded and marginalised from participating in activities which are considered the norm for other people in society.”

National Anti-Poverty Strategy, 1997

This long-standing definition of poverty and social exclusion recognises that a person’s experience and understanding of their well-being is influenced by that of society generally. We compare ourselves to others and use that knowledge as a gauge to measure our own well-being and our place within our community and wider society.

However welfare or ‘well-being’ is not something that can be measured by a single income-related metric, although income poverty measured in relative terms can be a strong indicator of a person’s welfare. Education, health, housing, employment and social integration (i.e. a person’s sense of “connectedness” with their community) are all factors that contribute to a person’s overall sense of well-being or welfare. These are also factors that can help compensate for income deficiencies. Equally, high levels of income (low levels of income poverty) may not be associated with higher welfare if these are accompanied by poor quality or high cost services, low levels of social integration, or a diminution in the sense or value of community.

This broader understanding of the nature of poverty and social exclusion is aptly reflected in the definition of Social Exclusion set out in the Partnership 2000 Agreement:

“Social exclusion can be succinctly described as cumulative marginalisation from production (unemployment), from consumption (income poverty), from social networks (community, family and neighbours), from decision making and from an adequate quality of life”

This approach to the definition of poverty and social exclusion is also reflected in the EU2020 strategy, in particular the “European Platform Against Poverty” initiative, which describes poverty in the following terms:

“Poverty in its multiple dimensions includes a lack of income and sufficient material resources to live in dignity; inadequate access to basic services, such as healthcare, housing and education; labour market exclusion and poor quality work.”

These definitions of poverty and social exclusion are also central to the European Pillar of Social Rights which, by specifying ‘fair working conditions’ as one of the three key components to support inclusive and sustainable growth, echoes the European Platform Against Poverty’s inclusion of ‘poor quality work’ as an indicator of poverty and social exclusion.

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While these refinements in the definition of poverty/social exclusion are welcome, their focus is still on what we want to avoid. While not neglecting these definitions this Roadmap is focused on what we are striving to achieve; with a focus on the positive difference that policy can, and should, make to the lives of people and to our society.

Therefore this new Roadmap is framed in terms of the achievement of Social Inclusion which we define as follows:

“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.”

This focus on social inclusion as the key objective allows for better alignment with the ‘Active Inclusion’ approach adopted by the European Union, described by the European Commission as “enabling every citizen, notably the most disadvantaged, to fully participate in society, including having a job”. We will work to try to achieve this through the combination of a number of approaches set out in this document.

Consultation Process

This Roadmap was developed by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, with input from a number of Government departments, following a period of public consultation. Views were sought from people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and the Community and Voluntary sector groups working with them in a number of ways: through an online public consultation process which took place in February 2018; at the 2017 and 2018 annual Social Inclusion Forum¹ and through regular meetings between the Department and the Community and Voluntary sector.

The Roadmap was also informed by current European and international policy, including the Europe 2020 Strategy, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Social Charter and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Further information on these EU and international initiatives is available online at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection site on www.gov.ie.

Ambitions and Commitments

In the 23 years since the first National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) was published in 1997 successive governments have developed detailed sectoral plans with social inclusion and the reduction of poverty as key objectives; for example the *National Strategy for Women and Girls* commits to advancing socio-economic equality for women and girls and to embedding gender equality in decision making. *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures* and the *First 5* strategy are both

¹ The annual Social Inclusion Forum is an event, organised by the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection, which provides the opportunity for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and the community & voluntary sector groups that represent them to engage directly with policy officials from a range of government departments and highlight and discuss their key concerns.

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focused on improving outcomes for children and young people, and the *National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy* aims to help address barriers faced by these often marginalised communities. The *National Disability Inclusion Strategy* and the *Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities* both commit the Government to take affirmative action to ensure people with disabilities have the opportunity and the supports necessary to play a full part in Irish society.

These and other strategies in welfare, health, education, housing, enterprise and community development now have social inclusion as a core objective, as evidenced in new strategies published in 2019 such as *Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: a strategy to support the community and voluntary sectors in Ireland* and the *National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy 2019-2021*. In addition specific posts have been created and responsibilities allocated at Ministerial level to ensure the delivery of these plans has the appropriate level of focus and decision making authority.

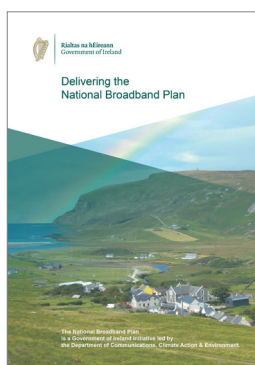
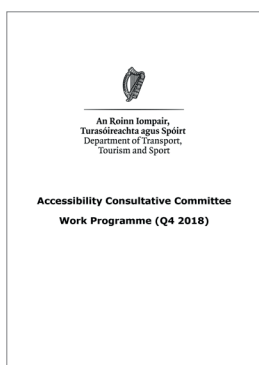
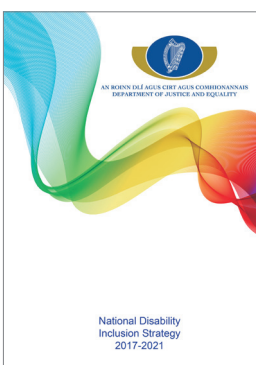
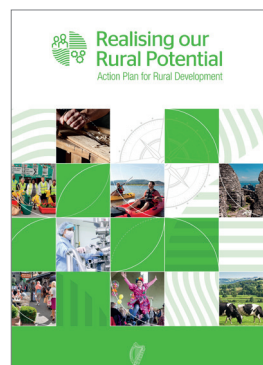
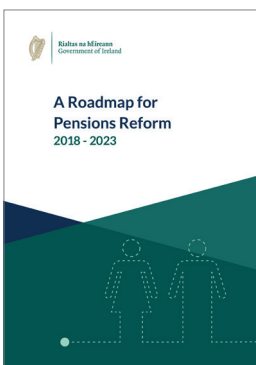
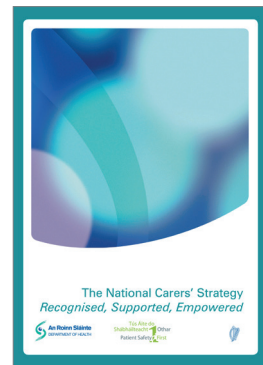
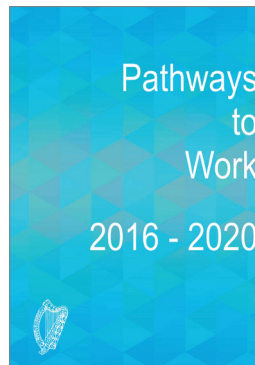
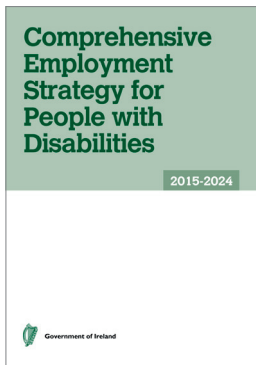
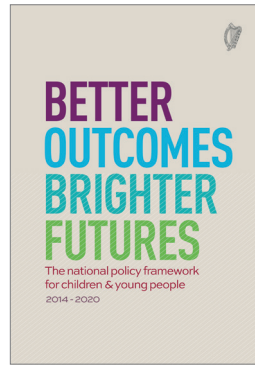
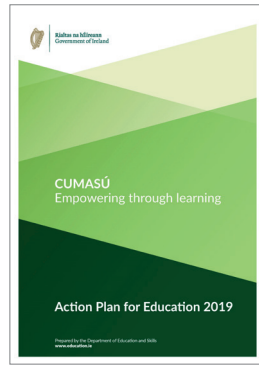
The purpose of this Roadmap for Social Inclusion is not to duplicate or substitute for these other national strategies which remain, and rightly so, key to ensuring that social inclusion is at the core of public policy and service strategy across all departments and Government services. Accordingly the purpose of this Roadmap is threefold:

- Set a level of ambition for what it is we wish to achieve and to have this ambition inform and be reflected in sectoral and service plans across Government as they are renewed and updated over coming years.
- Identify specific commitments, particularly with regard to income supports and employment services, which will complement the sectoral approaches and ensure that the risk of poverty and deprivation is minimised, with priority given to the needs of those experiencing or at risk of experiencing the poorest outcomes. The development of strategies and ambitions is subject to the expenditure envelope available and negotiations throughout the budgetary cycles over the period of this Roadmap.
- Set up an evidence-based framework for monitoring and reporting progress both to hold ourselves to account and to inform the renewal of existing, and the development of future, sectoral strategies.

This document therefore sets out our level of **ambition**, accompanied by specific **targets** to be achieved against a comprehensive set of metrics, with appropriate disaggregation, including by gender, where data is available. For each ambition it identifies key **commitments** with timelines for delivery by identified lead agencies. It also sets out a **governance** approach for monitoring and reporting progress. There are 66 unique commitments, three of which appear across multiple chapters reflecting the structure of the Roadmap.

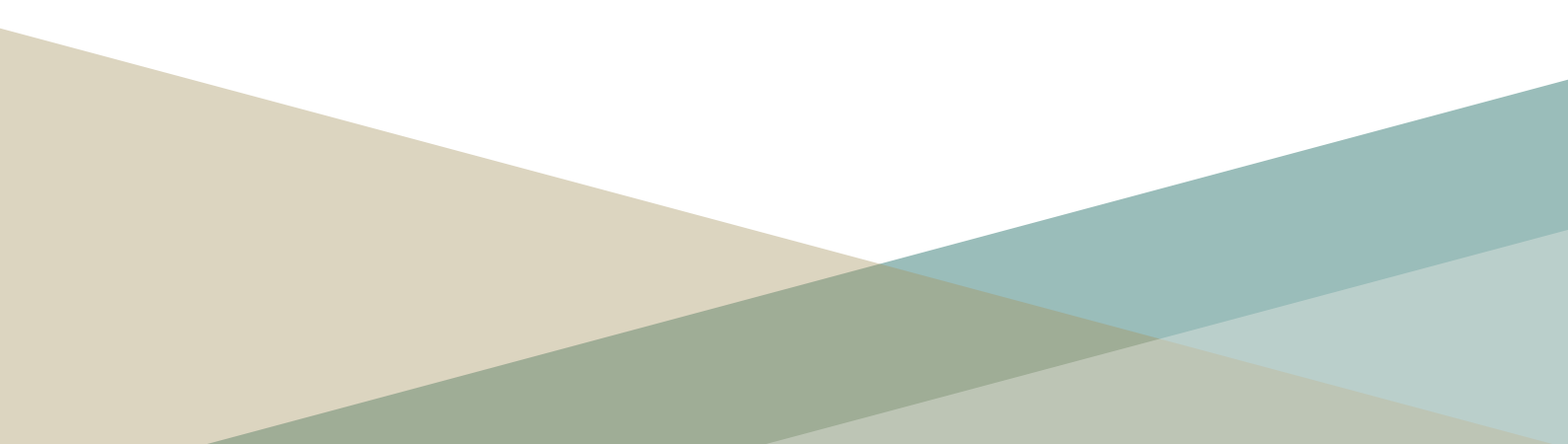
In short in this Roadmap we set out to be ambitious in our intent and specific in our commitments, which when delivered will help to make Ireland one of the most socially inclusive countries in Europe.

Social Inclusion - A Key Driver of Policy and Service Development across Government



Chapter 1

Our Ambition for Social Inclusion



Chapter 1: Our Ambition for Social Inclusion

Ambition: To reduce consistent poverty to 2% or less and to make Ireland one of the most socially inclusive countries in the EU

The key measure of progress is not the effort being promised or even that being made but rather the ‘outcomes’ that are achieved. To this end the Government reaffirms its commitment to achieve the long-held, but as yet unrealised, ambition of reducing consistent poverty to 2% or less.

However we need to go further than that. A predominantly income-based metric, such as consistent poverty, cannot of itself adequately capture the multi-faceted dimensions of social exclusion which cuts across gender, age, civil and family status, ethnicity, membership of the Traveller community, disability and sexual orientation among other dimensions. If our goal is to truly move to the promotion of an inclusive society we need to increase our ambition and to expand and refine the metrics used to monitor and report on progress to reflect these dimensions.

For this reason this Roadmap takes a different approach to previous plans in specifying targets to be achieved. Rather than focusing only on income-related measures it sets targets against a number of specific metrics which can capture progress across a number of key aspects of social inclusion: housing, healthcare, early learning and care and social integration. These targets are set to position Ireland as a top performer within Europe in promoting and achieving high levels of social inclusion.

The new targets are, in the main, taken from, and follow the structure of, the published Eurostat statistics on *Living Conditions in Europe*². In addition to reflecting the broad, multi-faceted nature of social inclusion, this approach also has the advantages of:

- Facilitating standardised independent and reliable reporting of policy performance in Ireland as compared with other EU states.
- Recognising that, as a small regional economy within the EU, heavily dependent on international trade and investment, Ireland’s capacity to reduce poverty and improve social inclusion is strongly linked to the performance of the wider European economy.
- Reflecting the fact that, given social and economic policies are framed within the context of EU wide initiatives and rules, the effectiveness of Ireland’s selection and use of those policy levers within its own remit will be demonstrated by the progress made in reducing poverty/improving social inclusion in Ireland as compared with other EU states.

The proposed target levels for 2025 are set out in Tables 1A and 1B. Table 1A includes both ranking and quantitative targets, the latter indicating the absolute levels of performance that would need to be achieved for each of the measures in order to attain the target ranking, based on 2018 data. The targets are set with the ambition of positioning Ireland, as a minimum, within the top 5 ranked EU countries for those measures where it is currently outside of this level and in the top or second ranked position of countries in respect of measures where it is already within the top 5³.

² See Living Conditions In Europe 2018 Edition at <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-statistical-books/-/KS-DZ-18-001>. This report consolidates data reported under the SILC, and other, surveys in each member country.

³In the case of the Housing Cost Overburden rate and the Overcrowding rate the target is to at least maintain our position in the Top 5

Chapter 1: Our Ambition for Social Inclusion

Importantly, reflecting our commitment to the core National Social Target for Poverty Reduction, we also retain the ambition of reducing the level of Consistent Poverty in Ireland to a level of 2% or less. The Roadmap will also seek to deliver on the child poverty component of the National Social Target for Poverty Reduction (which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5: Supporting Families and Children).

The scale of the challenge in meeting these new and existing targets is clear. Based on the most recent available data Ireland is ranked 15th in the EU in relation to the headline target of reducing the risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE). The risk of poverty or social exclusion for Ireland in 2018 was estimated at 21.1%; moving into the top five ranked countries means that this risk will have to be reduced to approximately 16.7%, an improvement of over four percentage points (or some 21%).

This is similar to the rate of improvement that was achieved over the past ten years since 2009. The target is clearly ambitious and will be difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, the Government is clear in its ambitions and its commitment to the targets set out.

Table 1A: Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 -2025
EU Measures and Targets

Table 1A: EU Measures and Targets		EU Ranking		Absolute Level	
Aim	Measure	Actual (2018)	Target (2025)	Actual (2018)	Target (2025)
Risk of Poverty and Social Exclusion Become a top 5 country	The share of people who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) - Headline Measure	15	5	21.1%	16.7%
Income Distribution Become a top 5 country	The income quintile share ratio	10	5	4.2:1	3.8:1
Income Poverty Become a top 5 country or improve rank within the top 5 countries	The share of people who are at risk of poverty before social transfers (incl. pensions)	10	5	41%	37.9%
	The share of people who are at risk of poverty after social transfers	11	5	14.9%	12.8%
	The share of people who are at risk of poverty anchored in 2017 ^^	11	5	15.6%	13.3%
	The in-work at risk of poverty rate	3	2	4.8%	3.5%
	The AROPE rate for children under 18 years of age	20	5	23.9%	16%
	The AROPE rate for people with disabilities	21	10	36.9%	28.7%
Housing Quality Maintain rank within the top 5 countries	The housing cost overburden rate	3	Top 5	3.4%	2%
	The overcrowding rate	2	Top 5	2.7%	2.5%
Socio-Economic Aspects of Living Conditions Become a top 5 country or maintain/improve rank within the top 5 countries	The share of the population who report their health as either good or very good	1	1	84.2%	84.2%
	The share of the population reporting unmet health care needs due to cost/expense	18	5	0.9%	0.1%
	The share of the population living in households with very low work intensity*	26	5	13.1%	5.5%
	The share of children receiving formal childcare**	2	1	69.2%	69.4%
	The share of the population suffering severe material deprivation ^^	15	5	5.2%	3.1%
Social Participation and Integration*** Become a top 5 country	Active citizenship rate	7	5	13%	17.2%
	Participation in formal voluntary work	7	5	29%	34.1%

Note: Rankings are based upon the EU-27 (EU-28 excluding the UK)

^^ Data for 2018 was not available at time of writing - 2017 data used

*Due to technical sampling issues (ESRI, 2015⁴) the EU-SILC 'very low work intensity' indicator is not the appropriate for measuring jobless households in Ireland. It is anticipated that the upcoming Integrated European Social Statistics (IESS) regulation should harmonise these social surveys at a technical level from 2020 onwards.

**From 3 years to minimum compulsory school age (duration: 1-29 hours)

***Data relates to an ad-hoc module (2015 only) and future reporting is dependent on additional modules being available

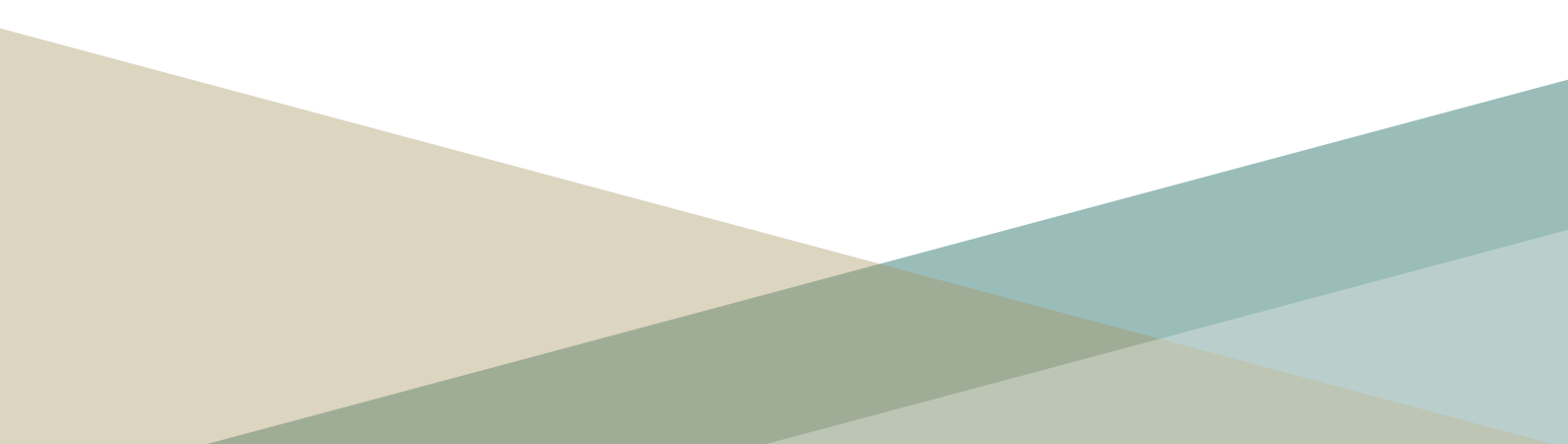
⁴ <https://www.esri.ie/publications/technical-paper-on-the-measurement-of-household-joblessness-in-silc-and-qnhs-2004-2012-an-analysis-of-the-cso-survey-on-income-and-living-conditions-silc-and-the-quarterly-national-household-survey>

**Table 1B: Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 -2025
National Measures and Targets**

Table 1B: National Measures and Targets		Actual (2018)	Target
National Social Target for Poverty Reduction	The share of the population in consistent poverty	5.6%	2% (2025)
Child Poverty Target (BOBF)	Maintain the ambition to lift over 70,000 children (aged 0-17 years) out of consistent poverty by 2020, a reduction of at least two thirds on the 2011 level (107,000 children)	92,000	37,000 (2020)
Employment Target for People with a Disability	Increase the employment level of people with a disability as measured by Census data, over two censal periods	22.3% (Census 2016)	25% (Census 2021) 33% (Census 2026)
Education	Continue to improve retention rates at second level in DEIS schools in order to reach the national norm (currently 91.6 %)	85%	91.6% or national norm
Social Housing	Under Rebuilding Ireland, deliver 50,000 new social homes through build, refurbishment, acquisition and leasing, with the delivery of 12,000 additional social housing homes annually, through build, refurbishment, acquisition and leasing programmes	85%	50,000 by 2021; 12,000 annually post 2021

Chapter 2

Expanding the Opportunity of Employment



Chapter 2: Expanding the Opportunity of Employment

Goal: Give everyone who can work the opportunity of employment as a means to improve their well-being

While it is accepted that employment provides the best means of reducing poverty, it is also accepted that we cannot rely in a passive manner on the market to create quality and sustainable jobs, as envisaged under the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the public consultation which informed the development of this Roadmap, five principal issues were raised in relation to how we can improve social inclusion outcomes through employment.

- The provision of quality and secure employment opportunities was seen as being critical to attracting and retaining people in employment.
- Education and skills training should equip people, men and women, not just for available employment opportunities but also with the 'transversal' skills to allow them to adapt as employment changes and to develop their careers and earnings potential, including via life-long training/in-work education.
- It was suggested that the public employment services (Intreo) should prioritise people who are long-term unemployed, including young people who have never worked and people not currently defined as unemployed, in particular people with disabilities and home-carers/homemakers. In addition the potential expansion of Intreo services, to support existing workers in making employment transitions and to support new labour market entrants or people on the cusp of entering the labour market, was also raised.
- There are a number of perceived barriers to workforce participation, mainly related to the withdrawal of social welfare supports and other entitlements on taking up work, which were cited as cause for concern.
- Concern was also expressed about marginalised groups who may be subject to unconscious and often conscious bias, including women, migrants, members of the Travelling and Roma communities, members of the LGBTI+ community and former prisoners.

During the timeframe of this Roadmap the Government will seek to address each of these concerns.

The successful implementation of the policies, strategies and commitments detailed in this chapter will support and improve the capacity of people to take up employment, education and training opportunities. This can enhance their employment prospects over time, as well as their ability to earn an adequate income to support themselves and their families. This is an important element of any policy approach to reducing poverty and increasing social inclusion in Ireland.

Chapter 2: Expanding the Opportunity of Employment

Creating Quality Employment Opportunities

The steps that the Government is taking to address concerns regarding the perceived increase in the precariousness of work will be set out in Chapter 3. This is only part of the solution. In addition the Government, through its enterprise, education and training strategies, will continue to pursue the goal of supporting the creation and sustainment of creating high-value employment in Ireland. These are summarised below.

Future Jobs Ireland

Future Jobs Ireland identifies five key pillars as a means of improving competitiveness and increasing employment and, importantly, ensuring that employment is concentrated in high quality jobs that will be resilient into the future:

- Embracing innovation and technological change
- Improving SME productivity
- Enhancing skills and developing and attracting talent
- Increasing participation in the labour force
- Transitioning to a low carbon economy

Medium-term ambitions and targets to be achieved are specified for each pillar. For example, by 2025, Future Jobs Ireland targets a doubling of participation rates in lifelong learning and increasing labour force participation by three percentage points. Each year we will set out the steps to deliver on these ambitions with commitments from across the whole of Government. In 2019, for example, there were over 120 of these deliverables.

Enterprise 2025

'Enterprise 2025' outlines the Government's medium-term national enterprise strategy with a vision for Ireland to be the best place to succeed in business, delivering sustainable employment and higher standards of living for all.'

Enterprise 2025 Renewed' contains a range of actions including:

- Addressing the likely increased demand for new skills post-Brexit, including customs; logistics; risk management; supply chain management; international selling and foreign technical language capability, based on analysis to identify specific actions needed.
- Expanding the reach, engagement and impact of the Regional Skills Fora to build on progress made to date.

Chapter 2: Expanding the Opportunity of Employment

- Providing alternative education and training options through secondary schools, work places etc., to help people make the right choices for themselves and to stimulate continuous learning of global challenges.

The Government commits to ensuring that progress on these strategies is reported as part of the Governance process for this Roadmap.

Education and Skills Training for Employment

The views expressed in the consultation have been raised in other fora on a number of occasions, including in the National Skills Council and the Regional Skills Fora. These views have therefore already informed the development of education and training sector policies and strategies including:

National Skills Strategy 2025 – Ireland’s Future

This strategy was developed to ensure a more dynamic, responsive and high quality system that provides all learners with the knowledge and skills they need to participate fully in society and the economy. The Strategy has over 150 measures and over 50 different stakeholders and provides a framework for skills development that will help drive Ireland’s growth both economically and societally over the next decade. Key to the strategy is the guidance and leadership provided by the *National Skills Council* and the nine *Regional Skills Fora*. These provide fora where practitioners, advocates, business leaders, policy makers and service providers cooperate on the identification, design, development and implementation of education and training initiatives both at a national and local level.

Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship 2016-2020

The Action Plan sets out a series of actions and annual targets to grow apprenticeship and traineeship provision. It targets 31,000 new registrations on apprenticeship programmes and 19,000 traineeship enrolments over its lifetime. This represents a more than doubling of activity over the plan period.

In addition, SOLAS (the Further Education and Training Authority) has completed the review on pathways to participation in apprenticeship. The purpose of the review is to ensure that the national apprenticeship system is more reflective of the diversity of our population, more inclusive of diverse backgrounds and abilities and that apprenticeship opportunities are more readily accessible to all.

Further Education and Training Strategy (FET) 2014-2019

This strategy set out a vision to transform the sector, and provide a focus for the annual funding and investment priorities, to deliver a world-class integrated system of further education and training that would support economic development, increase social inclusion and to meet the needs of all who engage with FET. It contained over 50 individual actions arranged around the strategy’s five strategic goals:

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- Active Inclusion
- Skills for the Economy
- Quality Provision
- Integrated Planning and Funding
- Standing of FET

A progress review of the FET Strategy was published in June 2018. The purpose of the review was to assess the appropriateness, priority and continued relevance of the strategic goals and actions, having regard to the significant reform of the sector, Government policy in the area (including the *National Skills Strategy (2025)*, the *Action Plan for Education*, the *Action Plan for Jobs, Pathways to Work 2016-20*) and the wider economic and labour market developments since the strategy was first published in 2014. It produced a number of recommendations that will be taken forward in the development of the next FET strategy, which will cover the five years from 2020.

A new Further Education and Training Strategy for the next five year period from 2020 is due to be published and the Government commits that this strategy will include specific provisions to encourage and support so-called 'non-active' groups to participate in education and training as a stepping stone to employment. This will support Pillars 2 and 3 of Future Jobs Ireland – Improving SME Productivity and Enhancing Skills and Developing and Attracting Talent, respectively – through the development of digital skills via such channels as the ETBs and Skills to Advance.

National Youth Strategy, 2015-2020

In addition to these broader strategies, the National Youth Strategy includes a specific objective which recognises that young people are better able to participate in the labour market through enhanced skills and competencies that complement formal learning and training qualifications and entrepreneurship opportunities. This contributes to the broader aim of the strategy to enable young people to reach their full potential.

Renewing our Public Employment Services Strategy

While the Action Plan for Jobs, Future Jobs Ireland and Enterprise 2025 set out to create sustainable work, the employment services strategy, Pathways to Work, sought to ensure that as many of these jobs as possible could be taken up by people who were excluded from employment; by people who, although employed, might be employed in precarious or low-value work; or by people who did not participate in the labour market, in particular those who felt excluded from labour market participation.

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During the period of recession Pathways to Work was focused on addressing the needs of people who were unemployed and, in particular, in seeking to stem the flow from short-term into long-term unemployment. As the country emerged from recession the focus of the strategy changed to people who were long-term unemployed, and to increasing labour market participation as a means of supporting active inclusion.

A review of the Pathways to Work approach is now underway. This review will assess progress under the current strategy and will lead to the development of an updated approach to the provision of employment services. In particular it will consider:

- Which categories of jobseeker should be prioritised for support and assistance as the economy continues to recover
- How the State's public employment service (Intreo) can be extended to help increase labour market access and participation e.g. among 'stay at home' homemakers, people with disabilities, the Travelling community, the migrant community, early school leavers and among other disadvantaged groups including prisoners
- If and how the Intreo service can be extended to offer services to people in employment (particularly those in low-paid or casual employment) and to people on the cusp of entering the labour market in order to help them progress in their careers
- How the various services offered (job search assistance and advice, work experience programmes, occupational placements, training and education, recruitment incentives and subsidies etc.) can be adapted and improved to best address the changing labour market requirements

As part of this process the Labour Market Advisory Council will be convened to help inform and advise Government as to the most appropriate and effective strategies to follow over the next three to five year period.

Addressing Barriers to Labour Market Participation of Families

The enterprise, skills and public employment services strategies set out above will play a significant role in creating employment opportunities and assisting people to prepare for and to access these opportunities. The various income supports and employment incentives discussed elsewhere in this document will also help people who are at or near the poverty thresholds sustain an adequate standard of living. However many contributors in the consultation process expressed the view that there are practical barriers and concerns, relating for example to retention of ancillary welfare benefits and to early learning and care costs, that can militate against people moving from welfare or from inactivity into employment.

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Flexible Welfare Benefits – Communicating Better

The social welfare system provides flexibility to people in moving into employment, for example by allowing people to retain the medical card for three years, subject to meeting certain qualifying criteria, once they get a job (and longer depending on the income earned); by supporting part-time employment; by allowing people retain the child dependent element of a welfare payment for two years while in employment; by providing in-work income supports via the Working Family Payment; and, through the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP), ensuring that income related rent supports can continue to be paid. However, as the consultation process made clear, there is insufficient awareness of these supports and more can be done to communicate their availability more effectively. Accordingly a communications campaign will be developed to better inform people as to their rights and entitlements on moving from welfare into work.

Early Learning and Care Obligations – Helping Parents with Work-Life Balance

One of the key factors which is perceived to give rise to a lower employment rate for women in Ireland is the requirement, mainly carried by women, to care for children and the associated difficulties posed by the availability, and high costs, of early learning and care.

In order to address these issues the Government is committed to increasing both paid and unpaid parental leave entitlements in a manner that encourages both parents to share the child-caring duties. In 2019, an additional two weeks paid parental leave was introduced and this will be increased to a total of seven additional weeks over the next three years. This is in addition to existing paternity and maternity leave entitlements, including the extension announced in 2019. Further detail is provided in Chapter 5.

Early Learning and Care Cost – Introducing Affordable Early Learning and Care

With regard to cost, the Government introduced more streamlined subsidies through the National Childcare Scheme in 2019. The new National Childcare Scheme replaces existing targeted subsidy programmes with a single, streamlined and more user-friendly scheme which will include “wraparound” care for pre-school and school-age children.

Increasing Opportunities for Carers

Carers make a vital contribution to society, providing 24/7 care for family members and others who might otherwise be wholly reliant on the State. However, for carers, balancing their caring responsibilities with employment, education or training is an ongoing challenge. While there are income supports available through the social welfare system and homecare supports to assist them in their caring role, transitioning into full-time employment, education and training or

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increasing their level of engagement can be difficult, particularly for people who have been in a caring role for an extended period of time. Existing supports for carers who wish to return to work include the Springboard+ programme which provides free higher education places and the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) which provides intensive support on an individual or group basis to those who are disengaged from the labour market.

The Department of Health is responsible for the National Carers Strategy and has committed to undertaking a Carers Needs Assessment within a community healthcare organisation to assess the needs of family carers across all care groups. The Department will also introduce a new statutory scheme of regulation for home care designed to support family carers and integrate with other health and social care services.

In Budget 2020, provision was made to increase the number of hours that carers can work while retaining their right to receive a Carers Allowance payment. As part of the renewal of its Pathways to Work strategy, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection will examine options to further support carers who wish to increase their level of engagement with or transition into full time employment, education or training.

Barriers Facing Marginalised Groups

There are a number of groups in society who face additional, and sometimes unspoken, barriers in accessing and taking up employment opportunities. Cultural and social norms, inherited biases and legacy service deficiencies militate against people from identifiable minority groups being accepted as equal participants in the labour market and this in turn can, understandably, impact negatively on motivation and behaviour at an individual level.

These groups include people from the Travelling and Roma communities, some migrant nationalities, members of the LGBTI+ community and former prisoners. Despite the number of policy initiatives under way (e.g. *The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy; the Migrant Integration Strategy*) and a number of targeted schemes in place (e.g. bespoke community employment schemes, the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme), employment rates are low and poverty rates are high.

The Government now commits to review the programmes already in place and to develop, as part of the public employment and further education and training service strategies, improved programmes and services with the target of increasing labour market participation and employment outcomes. The development of these services (including for example prisoner in-reach services, Travelling Community 'out-reach' services, employer recruitment incentives and work-placements etc.) will form a discrete part of the forthcoming employment services strategy to replace the *Pathways to Work* policy.

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Statement of Commitments

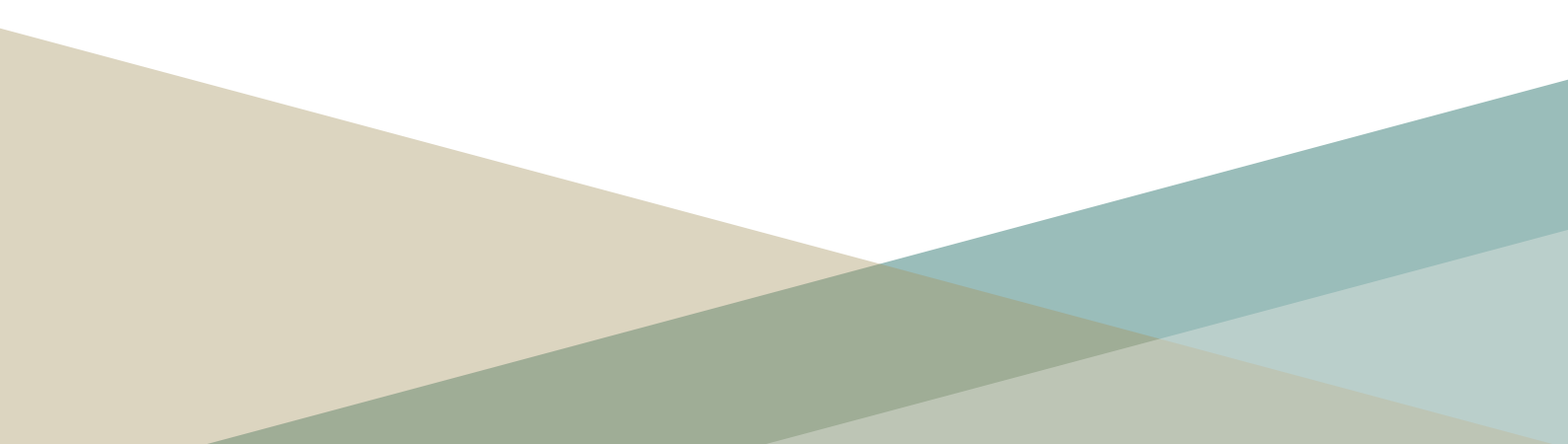
The commitments of the Government outlined in this chapter, which will be subject to monitoring and reporting under the governance process for this Roadmap, are set out in the table below:

No.	Commitment	Responsible Departments	Timeline
1	Ensure that progress in respect of Future Jobs Ireland; Enterprise 2025; the Apprenticeship Action Plan; and the Further Education and Training Strategy is monitored and reported as part of the Roadmap monitoring programme.	DEASP; DBEI; DES	Ongoing
2	Develop and publish a new Further Education and Training Strategy for the next five year period from 2020, ensuring that it includes specific provisions to support socially excluded groups access training and education support.	DES	Q1 2020
3	Develop and publish a successor employment services strategy to Pathways to Work, with a focus on increasing labour market participation and improving employment transitions.	DEASP	Q1 2020
4	Review existing programmes as part of the new employment services strategy, to cater for the needs of marginalised groups/ socially excluded people.	DEASP; DES	Q1 2020
5	Convene the Labour Market Advisory Council to advise on the development of a successor plan to Pathways to Work.	DEASP	Q1 2020

No.	Commitment	Responsible Departments	Timeline
6	Develop a communications campaign to highlight the ability of people to retain key welfare benefits when taking up employment.	DEASP	Q4 2019
7	Implement an additional two weeks paid parental leave in 2019 and extend this to seven weeks over the subsequent three years (<i>see also commitment 29 below</i>)	DJE; DEASP	Q4 2019
8	Implement the new National Childcare Scheme, launched in November 2019 (<i>see also commitment 30 below</i>)	DCYA	Q4 2019
9	Undertake a Carers Needs Assessment within a community healthcare organisation to assess the needs of family carers across all care groups.	DoH	Work to commence in 2020
10	Introduce a new statutory scheme of regulation for home care designed to support family carers and integrate with other health and social care services.	DoH	Work to commence in 2019
11	Examine options to further support carers who wish to increase their level of engagement with or transition into full time employment, education or training.	DEASP	Q2 2020

Chapter 3

Supporting Workers and Families -
Ensuring Work Pays



Chapter 3: Supporting Workers and Families - Ensuring Work Pays

Goal: To ensure that workers are treated fairly and paid fairly and that work continues to be the best route to social inclusion

One of the key approaches for reducing consistent poverty is to support incomes through as high as possible level of employment. The evidence is clear that for most people in Ireland the level of employment-related income is sufficient to support an acceptable standard of living and that the single biggest indicator of whether a person is likely to experience poverty or deprivation is whether or not they are employed. It is appropriate that Government acts to protect and enhance the level of in-work income and ensure that work pays.

There are three main approaches to achieving this:

- Promoting fair working conditions, ensuring that work is not uncertain or precarious but is instead a reliable source of income; in other words that workers have sufficient clarity and certainty as to their rate of pay, their working hours and conditions of employment
- Ensuring an adequate minimum wage as a floor below which earnings should not fall
- Supporting families on low incomes by means of providing in-work income supports and support services

Promoting Fair Working Conditions

Advocates for workers' rights have been vocal in recent years about the dangers of the emergence of two trends: perceived increases in, first, the 'casualisation' of work and second, the use of so-called bogus self-employment; the latter as a means for employers to both avoid employment obligations and reduce social insurance payments for staff.

The Government has already taken action in the Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2018 to address problems caused by the perceived increase in the 'casualisation' of work and to introduce protections against so-called 'zero-hour' and 'if and when' contracts. In addition to prohibiting the use of zero-hour contracts (except in very limited circumstances) key provisions of this Act entitle workers to:

- A written statement of their core terms of employment within five days of commencing new employment
- Minimum payments where they are required to be available for work or are called in for work but that work doesn't materialise
- Guaranteed contracted weekly hours of work within bands that reflect their actual working hours

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These are important changes that offer real protection to workers. However there are still concerns that some employers can avoid providing any security to their workers by classifying them as self-employed: the problem of so-called ‘bogus’ self-employment.

Although there is limited evidence of this being a significant problem in Ireland, the Government wants to ensure that the potential for this practice to become widespread will be eliminated. Accordingly it commits to:

- Establishing a statutory code of practice enforceable by the Workplace Relations Commission, for the determination of the employment status of workers.
- Building and expanding the focused inspection team recently established within the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to examine suspected cases of false declaration of employee social insurance as self-employed social insurance.
- Increasing prosecutions of employers who are found to be deliberately falsifying the employment status of workers.
- Enforcing legislation to provide that delayed payments of social insurance by employers, who misclassify employees as self-employed, will be subject to interest penalties on the same basis as delayed payments of taxes.

In addition, as concerns have been expressed that the published data does not accurately capture the full extent of casual and bogus employment arrangements, the Government commits to commission an independent analysis and evaluation of trends in employment arrangements in Ireland.

The Government also introduced a new Jobseekers Benefit scheme for the self-employed in November 2019. This measure will provide a financial security net for thousands of small and medium businesses throughout the country in the event that their business ceases.

Ensuring a Fair Minimum Wage

The National Minimum Wage (NMW) is the legally-binding lowest hourly rate of pay that can be paid by an employer to an employee.

The national minimum wage approach seeks to find the balance between a rate of pay for work that is fair and equitable to workers but that will not have significant negative consequences for employers and competitiveness. It also seeks to take account of the impact of the minimum wage on levels of poverty and deprivation. It can be seen as a pragmatic approach providing a clearly defined minimum hourly rate for employees while not limiting the ability of employers to pay higher rates. It establishes a ‘pay floor’ below which no one should be expected to work. However, the evidence is that a minimum wage alone is not sufficient as a poverty alleviation strategy.

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In accordance with the National Minimum Wage Act, the Low Pay Commission⁵ (LPC) makes recommendations regarding the appropriate level of the NMW to the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection. Since the formation of the LPC in 2015, the Government has consistently implemented its recommendations. From 2007 to 2019 the NMW increased from €8.30 per hour to €9.80 per hour, an increase of just over 18% during a period when inflation was flat and average wages increased by about 9%. Accordingly people working on the minimum wage have seen very real increases, both relative to inflation and to wages earned by other workers. In addition to the NMW, certain workers benefit from better pay and working conditions through established frameworks such as employment regulation orders, joint labour committees, registered employment agreements and sectoral employment orders.

The Government has considered whether increases in the Minimum Wage floor should be accelerated. However, recent research by the ESRI⁶ found that there was limited overlap between low pay at an individual level and household poverty, and that low pay workers were more likely to be found in the middle of the income distribution (rather than in the lowest income groups, as might have been expected). When examined further, low wage earners were less likely to be at risk of poverty if they lived in a household of multiple earners and/or had few dependents.

Table 3.1: National Minimum Wage Hourly Rate 2007-2019

Date	National Minimum Wage	Increase in NMW €	%
1st January 2007	€8.30	0.65	8.5%
1st July 2007	€8.65	0.35	4.2%
19th January 2011	€7.65	- 1.00	-11.6%
1st July 2011	€8.65	1.00	13.1%
1st January 2016	€9.15	0.50	5.8%
1st January 2017	€9.25	0.10	4.2%
1st January 2018	€9.55	0.30	3.2%
1st January 2019	€9.80	0.25	2.6%

⁵ Established under the National Minimum Wage (Low Pay Commission) Act 2015

⁶ Logue, C. and Callan, T. (2016). 'Low Pay, Minimum Wages and Household Income: Evidence for Ireland', Budget Perspectives 2017/3, Dublin: ESRI

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This finding is also reflected in the fact that Ireland already ranks favourably in terms of the ‘in-work at risk of poverty rate’, having the third lowest in-work at risk of poverty rate in the EU at 4.8% compared to an EU 28 average of 9.6% in 2018.

The available evidence suggests that the approach of setting the NMW via the Low Pay Commission process continues to be appropriate. Accordingly, the Government commits to continue to progress improvements in the NMW in line with recommendations of the LPC. In addition it will commission a ‘mid-term’ update of the recently published ESRI research in 2022 to inform future policy approaches.

Supporting Families on Low Incomes

While the evidence is that most workers on the NMW are not at risk of poverty or social exclusion, it is also recognised that the approach to setting the NMW is not sufficient to address the needs of families on low incomes: families where the risk of poverty and deprivation is very real. In order to cater for day-to-day living expenses such families require a level of disposable income in excess of that provided by the NMW. In addition, they need subsidised or free access to high quality services such as housing, education, early learning and care and health services that would otherwise be outside of their reach. The starting point however is to address the income gap.

Enhancing Income Supports for Families with Children

The State already provides a range of income supports to help improve outcomes for families on low incomes. The universal payment of Child Benefit; the means tested provision of adult and child dependant allowances to people in receipt of welfare payments; and the availability of supplementary welfare payments to deal with exceptional or urgent needs all help to support families with children. In addition payments such as the Working Family Payment and the Back to Work Family Dividend supplement incomes of families where one or more parent/guardian is in employment. Similarly the social welfare system incorporates flexibility for part-time work arrangements (e.g. so-called casual work payments and the Part-Time Job Incentive scheme) and also facilitates families in retaining the medical card and rent supports when they take up work. In order to increase awareness and take-up of these in-work payments and supports, the Government commits to developing and running a communications campaign targeted at low-income families and families where one or more adult is on welfare payments. The Government also commits to reviewing the income thresholds used to qualify for these payments every two years to take account of changes in earnings; the first such review will take place in 2020.

Notwithstanding the availability of these payments, EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) data up to 2018 showed that children are at a higher risk of poverty than any other group in our society (using the EU at risk of poverty and social exclusion measure). It was clear, therefore, that more needed to be done to supplement the basic income of families with children. Accordingly in recent budgets the Government has made targeted changes to improve

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outcomes for families with children with increases for child dependent allowances, income thresholds for the working family payment and earnings disregards for the one parent family payment.

While the impact of these changes has yet to be reflected in SILC data (the most recent SILC data is in respect of 2018) the Government commits to continue to take account of the higher rates of poverty among children in low income and lone parent households in setting welfare rates within the annual budget process. The Government's goal in doing this is to improve the quality of life and the life outcomes for families and children on low incomes. As detailed in subsequent chapters the Government will also continue to expand services to support families with children (see Chapter 5).

In terms of targets progress will be measured by seeking to improve Ireland's ranking for child poverty (children under 18 years of age at risk of poverty or social exclusion) from 20th in the EU to 5th or lower (equivalent to reducing the percentage of children under 18 years of age at risk of poverty and social exclusion from 23.9% in 2018 to 16%).

Expanding Supports to Help People Manage Their Finances

Economic stress is an indicator which goes beyond income to include items such as debt, housing costs and the difficulties and stresses of managing on reduced household incomes. As reported in the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection's Social Inclusion Monitor 2017, the rate of economic stress rose consistently during the recession, reaching a peak in 2013. By 2017, the economic stress rate had reduced from this peak but was still above its pre-recession level.

Related to economic stress is the concept of 'financial exclusion' defined as the exclusion of people who encounter difficulties accessing and/or using financial services and products⁷. In Ireland this rate peaked at 11.9% in 2013 before falling to 5.8% in 2018. However, given the requirement to have access to banking services in order to participate fully in an increasingly cashless society, it is of concern that almost 6% of people appear to have no private banking arrangements.

There are a number of free/low cost State-funded resources in place to assist people in managing their financial affairs and accessing financial services. These include the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS), the Personal Micro-Credit Finance Scheme and the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman. Nevertheless in order to further improve financial management and literacy, particularly among low income families, the Government commits to exploring the options for a programme of financial education for people on low incomes with a view to launching such a programme during the period of this Roadmap.

⁷ The measurement is the percentage of individuals/households with no basic current account.

Chapter 3: Supporting Workers and Families - Ensuring Work Pays

Statement of Commitments

The commitments of the Government outlined in this chapter, which will be subject to monitoring and reporting under the governance process for this Roadmap, are set out in the table below:

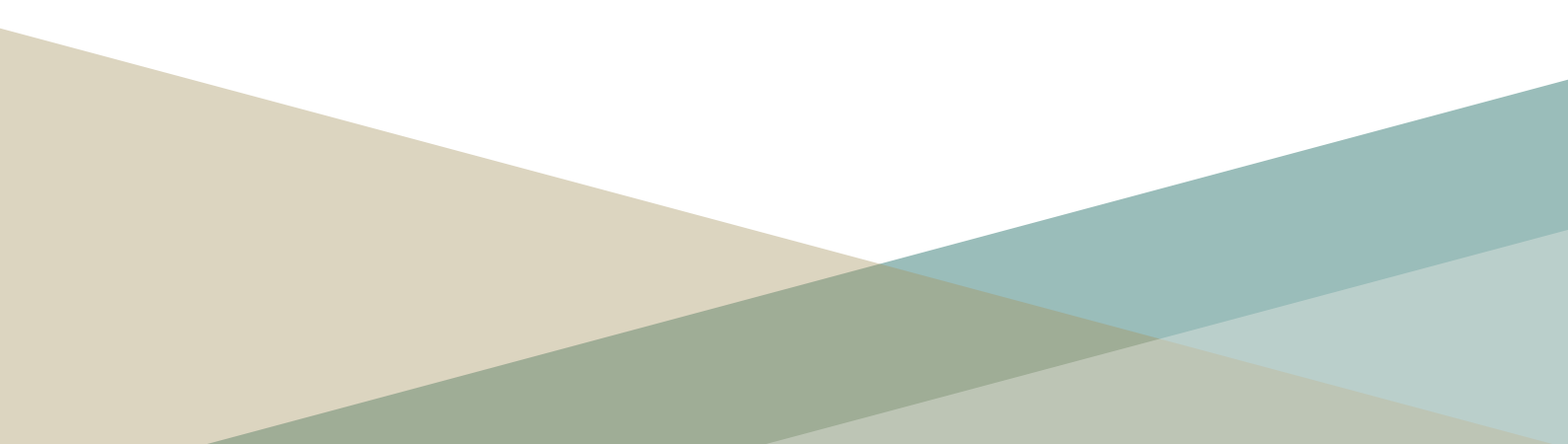
No.	Commitment	Responsible Departments	Timeline
12	Establish a statutory code of conduct for the determination of the employment status of workers.	DEASP	Q1 2020
13	Build and expand the focused inspection team established to investigate, and prosecute as appropriate, instances of false declaration of workers as self-employed for social insurance purposes.	DEASP	Ongoing
14	Enforce legislation providing for the application of interest charges on late payments of social insurance contributions where a worker was incorrectly declared as 'self-employed'.	DEASP	Ongoing
15	Commission, with the support of the Labour Market Advisory Council, a study of trends in employment arrangements in Ireland.	DEASP	Q2 2020
16	Develop and run a communications campaign to increase awareness of in-work income support payments for families on low-incomes.	DEASP	Q4 2019
17	Institute a biennial review of the earnings thresholds used to qualify for in-work income supports for families on low incomes.	DEASP	Q3 2020

No.	Commitment	Responsible Departments	Timeline
18	Continue to target a reduction in poverty among children and families on low incomes as part of the annual budget process.	DEASP; DPER	Ongoing
19	Establish and report on a new target in respect of Child Poverty, to improve Ireland's ranking from 20th to at least 5th for the EU SILC reporting year of 2025. This will be equivalent to reducing the percentage of children under 18 years of age at risk of poverty and social exclusion from 23.9% to 16%.	DEASP	Q1 2020 – Q4 2025^^
20	Set and report on a new target to further improve Ireland's EU ranking for 'in-work poverty' from 3rd to 2nd by reducing the rate of in-work poverty' to 2%.	DEASP	Q1 2020 – Q4 2025^^
21	Review options for improving the financial management competence and literacy / access to financial management for people on low incomes and report to Government with a proposed approach.	DEASP; DES; DRCD	Q2 2020

^^ The relevant SILC data is likely to be available by 2026/27

Chapter 4

Supporting Older People - Assuring Their Income



Chapter 4: Supporting Older People – Assuring Their Income

Goal: To protect the incomes of older people through the delivery of the commitment to benchmark State pension payments

A major concern of older people, reflected in the consultation process for this Roadmap, is the security and value of State pension payments. This reflects the fact that people who are heavily dependent on State pension payments, and whose ability to earn other income may be severely restricted, are sensitive to any risk that the value of the State pension may be vulnerable to the winds of economic and political change.

These concerns and this sense of vulnerability exist despite the policy of successive governments to protect and enhance the value of State pensions. This is evident from the very significant real increases in the value of pension payments in the period from the late 1990s to 2009, their protection during the recession period and the subsequent increases since 2013. As an example, in 1997 the standard pension rate of payment for a single person was €95.23. In 2007, this had increased to €209.30, an increase of 120% during a period when inflation was 38%. Between 2009 and 2019, this rate increased again to €248.30, or by about 19% compared to aggregate inflation level over the period of about 4%. As a consequence of these increases the Irish system of social transfers is now the most effective in EU and OECD countries in alleviating the impact of poverty and reducing inequality, particularly among older people.

While this past experience may be a matter of some interest for many pensioners, it is clear that it provides little reassurance as to future policy. To address this concern, and in response to recommendations made by various advocacy bodies and other groups, this Government has committed to the introduction of a system of benchmarking rates of pension payment both to average wages and to inflation. In this way people already on pensions can be assured that their incomes will be maintained, and those who are still in work can plan their own retirement arrangements with some confidence as to the future value of the State pension.

Benchmarking: The Rationale

At present, social welfare rates of payment are determined on annual basis as part of the budgetary process. Generally, proportionate increases are afforded to qualified adults and recipients of reduced rates of payment. While overall this system has worked well in terms of the impact of social transfers on poverty levels, it contains inherent difficulties:

- There is no explicit linkage between welfare rates and earnings, meaning that the real value of welfare rates relative to market-based earnings can deviate from year to year. This can, in turn, impact upon work incentives and poverty alleviation.
- Similarly, there is no explicit linkage between welfare rates and prices, again meaning that the real value of welfare rates can lead ahead or lag behind prices. This can, in turn, impact on the alleviation of deprivation.
- Recipients of social welfare payments, particularly those dependent upon longer-term payments (such as the State pension), cannot plan or budget with confidence over the medium to long-term.

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- People of working age cannot plan their own personal pension arrangements with confidence as to the future value of the State pension.
- The rate can be set as part of a political bargaining process leading to poorly justified changes and inequitable outcomes.
- As changes to welfare rates are both easy to implement and can yield immediate savings, welfare recipients can feel vulnerable to rate cuts during periods of recession.

Not surprisingly given these difficulties, most countries have now instituted a formal process of rate indexation and/or benchmarking as a means of assuring the value of welfare payments. Ireland is one of just two OECD countries that do not use a formal system of benchmarking. Given that welfare payment rates are now at or close to recommended benchmark levels it is appropriate that a process of linking welfare payment rates to market earnings and price movements be formally considered.

One Potential Approach: A Smoothed Earnings Benchmark for Pensions

In 2018, a commitment to develop proposals to benchmark the State Pension was published in the Roadmap for Pensions Reform 2018 – 2023:

“In setting the rate of State pension, Ireland is currently atypical compared to other EU countries in its approach to applying discretionary increases through political decisions in the annual budgetary process. Internationally, a more formal system of automatic or semiautomatic increases has greater prevalence. Typically increases are indexed to an economic indicator, such as inflation or earnings growth. The Government believes a regime of automatic indexation would introduce greater long term certainty for our retirees. Maintaining a constant real value to the State pension would also benefit individuals by allowing for greater transparency in financial planning and improved confidence about the level of any private retirement savings required to supplement the State pension.” (p.8)

As part of that Roadmap, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection was asked to examine and develop proposals for Government to set a formal benchmark target of 34% of average earnings for the contributory State Pension payments, and, in conjunction with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, to institute a process whereby future changes in pension rates would be explicitly linked to changes in the consumer price index and average wages.

One potential approach, currently under consideration, uses what can be described as a smoothed earnings system, whereby the rate of pension payment will be linked in the first instance to average wages but, in years where the increase in average wages is less than the rate of increases in prices, it will be linked to the rate of inflation. An example of such an approach is summarised in Box 1 overleaf.

Chapter 4: Supporting Older People – Assuring Their Income

Box 1: Smoothed Earnings – A Potential Approach

The smoothed earnings system addresses the two key challenges faced in benchmarking/indexation system. The first is that a benchmark linked to just one measure (e.g. prices) can result in a widening of the gap between the incomes of people dependent on State pensions and other people in society. On the other hand systems which use multiple benchmarks, for example the so-called twin-lock systems, generate a 'ratchet effect' whereby increases in pensions outstrip both prices and wages ultimately converging on, and potentially overtaking, wage levels.

A smoothed earnings system overcomes these difficulties as follows:

- Pension payments would, as a default, be benchmarked against the average earnings measure using the 34% target benchmark commitment of the Roadmap for Pensions Reform.
- This earnings based indexation would continue until the first period(s) in which price inflation exceeded earnings growth. During these periods pension payments would, in order to retain their real value, be changed in line with changes in the price measure (HICP/CPI).
- In subsequent periods, where earnings growth again exceeded inflation, pension rates would remain pegged to price inflation until such time as the earnings benchmark is restored.
- Indexation would then revert to the earnings benchmark until such time as earnings growth might again lag behind inflation when the cycle of changes just described would be repeated.

Such an approach would ensure that over the long-term the relative value of welfare payments compared to market earnings would be maintained and that over any short-medium term period the real value, or purchasing power, of these payments would be protected.

In order to assure transparency and independence in the application of this 'twin-lock' smoothed earnings approach, and in order to enable some consideration be taken of the wider economic and fiscal circumstances prevailing in any year, the application of this benchmarking process could be considered on an annual basis by an expert group to be appointed by the Minister. The outcome would then be subject to ratification by the Government in the same manner as increases in minimum wages recommended by the Low Pay Commission.

Chapter 4: Supporting Older People – Assuring Their Income

The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection is continuing, with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, to explore this smoothed earnings option and has been tasked with bringing forward a proposal for consideration by Government with a view to an approach being finalised in Q1 2020.

Other Supports and Services for Older People

While income security was the major issue raised during the consultation process, other issues of concern were also raised. These include the provision of long-term care supports to allow older people to live and age with dignity in their own homes related to which was the issue of access to services, in particular health, community and transport services.

These are issues that are a core focus of the National Positive Ageing Strategy (NPAS) which has a goal of providing more seamless supports for older people. They are also reflected in the Government’s priorities under Project Ireland 2040, including, for example, through commitments for significant investment in long-term residential care and community based nursing services and homes as well as in primary and community care centres. These investments will facilitate the local delivery of essential health services, which benefit older people as well as the community in general. Together with other existing initiatives, including streamlined funding for home support services, housing adaptation grants, supported housing, Local Link transport services and community/senior alert schemes, these investments will allow older people to remain in their communities confident in the availability of local services.

Statement of Commitments

The commitments of the Government outlined in this chapter, which will be subject to monitoring and reporting under the governance process for this Roadmap, are set out in the table below:

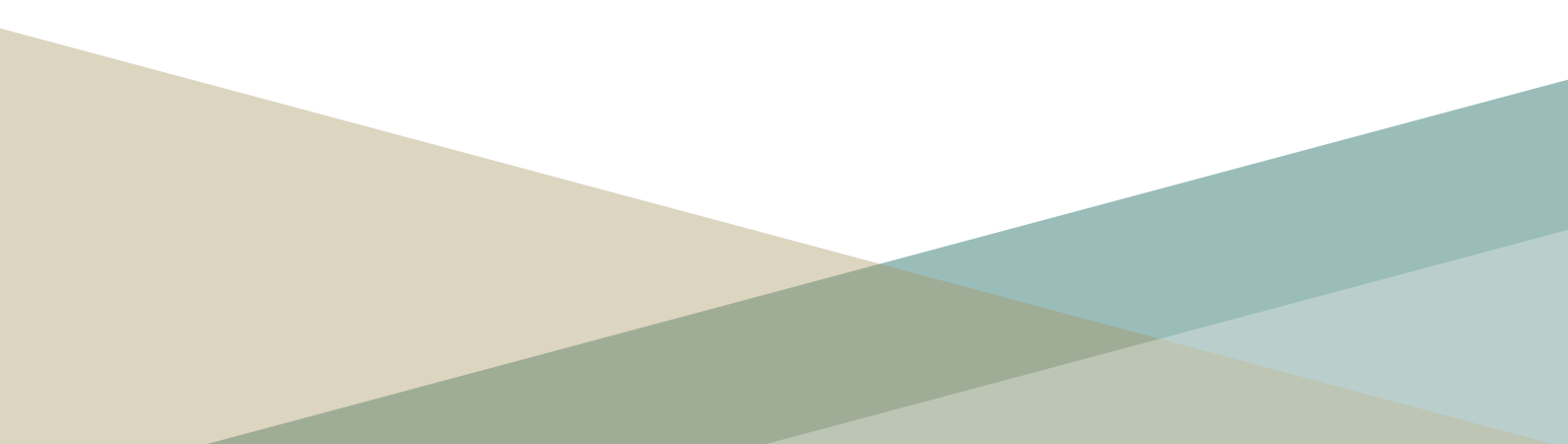
No.	Commitment	Responsible Departments	Timeline
22	Finalise an approach for benchmarking pension payments for Government decision.	DEASP	Q1 2020
23	Subject to Government decision, develop and prepare any necessary changes to legislation to give effect to a benchmarking approach.	DEASP	Q1 2020

No.	Commitment	Responsible Departments	Timeline
24	Apply the benchmark in adjusting Pension changes for Budget 2021.	DEASP; DPER	Q4 2020
25	Consider and prepare a report for Government on the potential application of the benchmarking approach to other welfare payments.	DEASP	Q3 2020
26	Continue to train GPs and primary care teams in the management of dementia under the Primary Care Education, Pathways and Research in Dementia (PREPARED) project.	DoH	Ongoing
27	Provide 4,500 additional short-term and long-term residential care beds across the public system in Community Nursing Units and other step-down facilities. ⁸	DoH	2027
28	Continue the refurbishment or replacement of 90 public community nursing units and long term residential care facilities for older people across the country.	DoH	Ongoing

⁸ The measurement is the percentage of individuals/households with no basic current account.

Chapter 5

Supporting Families and Children



Chapter 5: Supporting Families and Children

Goal: To reduce child poverty in Ireland and to ensure that all families have the opportunity to participate fully in society

It is generally accepted that three inter-related elements play a strong role in determining levels of child and family poverty: parental employment/attachment to the labour market; low rates of in-work poverty; and effective income support systems for those who cannot work⁹.

However these elements are themselves heavily influenced by the family setting itself. The family setting, whether that be a single parent or two-parent family, continues to be the critical unit in determining both adult and child social inclusion. The opportunities to which a child will have access and the progress they make during life is crucially dependent on the resources available to his/her family. Equally the ability of any parent to provide a stable environment for their children, to offer them the opportunity to succeed in life while at the same time developing and sustaining their own personal quality of life can be largely determined by the demands and costs of parenthood. The demands of family life can, of themselves, limit a person's ability to earn an income, to participate in employment or to pursue education with knock-on consequences for both the parent and the child. These effects can then themselves become self-sustaining as inequality can be transmitted inter-generationally.

These were common themes which arose during the consultation process informing the development of this Roadmap and led to calls for commitments under three headings:

- The need for further development of child-related services and supports to help families participate more actively in society whether that be through employment, education/training or voluntary and community activity.
- The need to maintain income support systems and, to the extent possible, differentiate income support payments and services given the differing demands on time and costs incurred depending on whether a child is, broadly speaking, under or over 12 years of age.
- The need to ensure Government remains focused on these issues by retaining a specific child poverty target.

Further Development of Child Related Services and Supports

Reflecting the importance the Government attaches to supporting families and children, overall responsibility for policy and service development in respect of child services is vested in a dedicated Government Department headed by a cabinet level Minister, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

Under the framework of *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: the national policy framework for children and young people 2014-2020 (BOBF)*, the Department has led and continues to lead the development of whole-of-Government approaches to services in support of children and young people. This strategy, overseen by the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium, has led for the first time to a set of coherent approaches to children's services and supports.

⁹ For example see Gábos, A. (2013), Successful policy mixes to tackle child poverty: an EU-wide comparison, AIAS, GINI Discussion Paper 76. <http://econpapers.repec.org/paper/aiaginidp/76.htm>

Chapter 5: Supporting Families and Children

First 5: A Whole-of-Government Plan for Babies, Young Children and their Families (2019-2028) specifically focuses on actions to improve the experiences and outcomes of children from birth to age five across various domains of children's lives. First 5 sets out the Government's intentions to extending family leave and access to family-friendly working; children's health services; parenting supports; child-friendly communities and early learning and care services. The First 5 Implementation Plan, published in May 2019, covers the first phase of implementation and identifies key milestones for each action across 2019, 2020 and 2021 as well as the key output for the action by 2021. Progressive universalism, the idea that all children and families should have some level of support but that some children and families will need additional support, is a central theme throughout First 5 and reflected in the thinking underpinning many actions.

The Importance of Early Learning and Care

A good balance of learning and care promotes children's overall well-being and supports good physical and mental health, positive learning and socio-emotional outcomes and positive self-image and identity. The largest gains from early learning and care are experienced by children from vulnerable groups, including low-income households, immigrant households and those with less educated parents. The benefits of early learning and care extend widely. It allows parents to participate in employment, education and training in the knowledge that their children are safe, happy, well cared-for and provided with opportunities for play and peer interaction. Labour force participation in turn increases family income and reduces the risk of poverty.

Whole of Government Approach to Tackling Child Poverty, published in October 2017, identified 48 actions which, combined, should deliver Outcome 4 of BOBF (Economic Security) and contribute to improved outcomes for children and their families. A number of important current and forthcoming developments in children's services include:

The National Childcare Scheme¹⁰: This is a new scheme for subsidising the cost to parents of their children's participation in regulated early learning and care provision including both a targeted and a universal element was rolled-out in late 2019. It offers, for the first time, statutory entitlement to subsidies to help parents with the cost of early learning and care and school age childcare provided by Tusla-registered services.

The Early Childhood Care and Education (universal pre-school) programme (ECCE): ECCE is a free universal programme of pre-school provision available to all children within the eligible age range and operates over 38 weeks per year from September to June. Since September 2018, all children within the eligible age range can avail of two full programme years before beginning primary school.

The Access and Inclusion Model (AIM)¹¹: AIM is a programme of supports (both universal and targeted) designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme in mainstream pre-school settings and can participate fully in the pre-school curriculum alongside their peers.

Chapter 5: Supporting Families and Children

Area-Based Childhood Programme: The Area Based Childhood (ABC) programme aims to improve outcomes for children through prevention and intervention programmes in 12 designated areas of disadvantage.

Targeted Youth Funding Scheme: This scheme aims to provide out of school supports for young people in their local communities to enable them to overcome adverse circumstances and achieve their full potential by strengthening their personal and social competencies.

Paid Paternity Leave: The scheme, introduced in 2016 and funded through the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, pays eligible fathers €245 per week for period of up to two weeks to help them take time off work during the first 6 months of their baby's life.

This work of extending and improving child-related supports to reduce poverty and improve social inclusion will continue with new initiatives in parental leave/early learning and care, education and health. This will include the development of a stronger focus on young people/youth (10-24 years) as a distinct group with the aim of improving outcomes, participation and wellbeing.

This will build upon the progress made to date. BOBF, First 5 and the Roadmap for Social Inclusion are complementary and seek to attain the same objectives to reducing child poverty and social exclusion whilst promoting child well-being. Box 2 below outlines the national outcomes and transformational goals targeted in BOBF.

Box 2: Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: the national policy framework for children and young people 2014-2020 (BOBF)

National Outcomes:

1. Active and healthy, physical and mental wellbeing
2. Achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development
3. Safe and protected from harm
4. Economic security and opportunity
5. Connected, respected and contributing to their world

Transformational Goals:

1. Support parents
2. Earlier intervention and prevention
3. Listen to and involve young people and children
4. Ensure quality services
5. Strengthen transitions
6. Cross-Government and interagency collaboration and coordination

Chapter 5: Supporting Families and Children

As part of this Roadmap the Government commits to a review of this strategy and as part of this review to consider how progress in reducing child poverty can be accelerated. The feasibility of ideas such as the introduction of a means-tested new baby grant and extending eligibility of the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance will form part of such a review.

Parental Leave/Early Learning and Care

Reducing the pressure on parents, particularly during the first critical year of a child's life, continues to be a priority. Similarly, engaging fathers in taking a larger role in sharing childcare responsibilities will help to address perceptions that child care is a 'woman's' role and, by extension, that child-rearing is a greater obstacle to employment for women. Therefore, as already referenced in Chapter 2, the Government confirms its commitment to introduce and extend periods of paid parental leave. Since November 2019, each parent is entitled to an additional two weeks of parental leave per parent, and this will progressively increase to seven weeks over the next three years in line with the *First 5* strategy. Taken together with existing paternity and maternity leave entitlements, parents will be eligible, between them, to take 40 weeks paid parental leave during the first year of their child's life. If normal holiday leave entitlements are taken into account, this means that many parents will have the option of caring for their child at home in the child's first year of life. This has the potential to significantly reduce time and cost pressures on parents and improve outcomes for children.

Education

Education has the power to transform lives, lift people out of poverty and break down cycles of disadvantage. The delivery of a high quality learning experience that challenges each learner to reach their full potential is key. Education policy in recent years, particularly at primary and secondary level, has had a core objective of improving the social inclusion of children suffering disadvantage, whether that be in relation to intellectual or physical disability (addressed through Special Education Supports) or by reference to economic disadvantage (addressed by the *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)* programme which remains the Department of Education and Skills primary policy to address educational disadvantage). The DEIS Plan 2017 is based on five key goals and aims for Ireland to become the best in Europe at harnessing education to break down barriers by equipping learners to contribute effectively to society. The DEIS Plan includes an ambitious set of objectives and actions to support children who are at greatest risk of educational disadvantage.

The Action Plan for Education 2019 - Cúmasú sets out an ambitious plan of action to improve outcomes for disadvantaged students. Actions include the recruitment of additional psychologists for the National Education Psychology Service (NEPS); rollout of training for teachers to promote social and emotional competence, resilience and school connectedness for all learners; programmes to enhance teacher capacity in areas of positive classroom management; and training for Post-Primary schools in the development of Student Support Teams to coordinate support and develop whole-of-school approaches to wellbeing promotion.

Chapter 5: Supporting Families and Children

It also includes the implementation of the DEIS Plan 2017 to close the gap in performance between DEIS and non-DEIS schools, embedding the Special Education Teacher model and developing the School Inclusion model pilot including Early Learning and Care (ELC) and In-school Therapy Demonstration Project service based on an evaluation of the existing pilot programme. The plan also commits to continuing collaboration with Tusla and Traveller representative groups on measures to improve Traveller engagement with education and implementing the National Access Plan to increase representation of under-privileged groups in higher education.

School Meals Programme

In addition to these measures, the Government has set an ambition of ensuring that all school children have access to one hot, nutritious, meal per day. For most children this can be provided within the home setting; however for many children, in particular those living in vulnerable situations or in families where incomes and resources are constrained, there is no guarantee that they will have access to a hot meal. A pilot scheme, launched by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection in September 2019 across 37 schools, will ensure that children in these schools will be offered a hot meal in the school setting every day during the school week. This pilot, which will be expanded in 2020 to cover 35,000 additional children, will be subject to evaluation of impact and outcomes to help to inform how best to deliver on the ambition of a hot meal for every child in the State in subsequent years. The First 5 strategy also includes an action to pilot a meals programme in early learning and care settings in 2020.

Healthcare

Improving health outcomes and the provision of healthcare to children and families has been a key driver in the development of healthcare policy in recent years. This is evidenced in: the extension of Universal GP Care for Children under 6 years of age (including the provision of periodic wellness checks for children once at age two and once at age five); child and family specific actions in the National Physical Activity Plan and in the Healthy Weight for Ireland policy and action plan 2016 – 2025; and the delivery of key health services for children in the earliest years through the National Healthy Childhood programme delivered primarily by the Public Health Nursing service.

This approach is continuing and the Government is committed to extending GP care without fees to children aged between 6 and 12 years, on a phased basis starting with children up to 8 years of age from 2020.

The Government is also committed as part of Sláintecare to extend free dental services on a progressive basis to children, starting with children under 6 years of age from 2020, and published its Smile agus Sláinte Oral Health policy in 2019. The feasibility of extending ophthalmic services on a similar basis will also be explored over the coming year.

Chapter 5: Supporting Families and Children

Income Supports and Payments

Prioritising welfare rate changes for families and children

The issue of in-work income supports for families and the interaction between welfare payments and work has already been covered in Chapter 3. As set out in that chapter the Government is committed both to sustaining and enhancing the value of work and to prioritising the continued reduction in child poverty rates in the annual budget process.

This commitment continues the approach adopted in recent budgets which saw the first increases in many years specifically for child dependent payments; the introduction of age related changes to these payments (higher payments for children over 12 years of age as recommended by many advocacy groups); increases in earnings disregard for lone parent payments (effectively reversing recession year cuts); and increases in earnings thresholds for the working family payments.

This policy of prioritising child related payments and in differentiating payments based on age will continue and will help ensure that current rates of child poverty are reduced.

Individualisation of Adult Welfare Payments

In addition the Government is open to adapting the current 'adult-dependent' concept that is currently an ingrained feature of the welfare system. Under this system, welfare payments to two parent families comprise three key elements: a primary payment for the person considered to be the main claimant; a secondary or adult dependent payment to additional adults in the household; and child dependent payments, made to the primary claimant, in respect of any children in the household.

A consequence of this approach is that the second and subsequent adults in any household do not receive an income in their own right and are also excluded from access to many support schemes and services. In addition to creating a relationship of dependency between the secondary and primary adults in a household, this payment structure can also exacerbate the problem of 'Very Low Work Intensity' households, a key indicator of social inclusion where Ireland scores particularly badly.

In order to address this issue the Government commits to examine the feasibility of individualising welfare payments, through the provision of a direct payment to the second 'dependent' adult in a household, with a view to reducing co-dependency and improving employment and earnings outcomes.

Supports for Lone Parent Households

One of the key factors driving child poverty in Ireland is the relatively low employment rates among lone parent families. This is linked both to the historical structure of lone parent welfare supports and to issues already discussed with regard to the availability and costs of early learning and care provision¹².

Chapter 5: Supporting Families and Children

In order to address the payment structure issue, the Government brought in changes to the One Parent Family (OFP) payment scheme in 2012. The most notable change was a reduction of the maximum age threshold to seven years for the lone parent's youngest child with a transitional arrangement for children up to 12 years of age. In addition, a maintenance disregard for the Working Family Payment was introduced in 2019. The evidence from a recent review is that this approach has been effective in increasing employment rates and incomes among lone-parents who worked full-time.

However, it is also recognised that other changes made at the same time resulted in income reductions for lone-parents who had part-time work. These changes have now been reversed and it is expected that the impact of these reversals will be reflected in forthcoming social inclusion data. The Government commits to using the most up-to-date research and statistical data on social inclusion and lone parents to inform its approach to further revisions with respect to income disregards to ensure lone-parents are not disadvantaged in taking up part time work. This, together with the commitment to prioritise the reduction of child poverty in the annual budget process should contribute to further reductions in poverty rates.

Having said this, a key determinant of whether a person is socially excluded or suffering from poverty is their employment status. While a strong system of welfare supports can mitigate the impact of poverty it can never fully lift a person out of poverty (where poverty is measured in a relative manner based on median income).

Accordingly, the Government is committed to taking a more pro-active approach to encouraging and supporting lone-parents to enter the workforce. The design of the new National Childcare Scheme, for example, awards enhanced hours to parents who are in work or study, while the Department of Education and Skills introduced the 1916 Bursary Fund to encourage participation by people from specific groups who are under-represented in higher education, such as lone parents. The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) also provides intensive one-to-one supports for lone parents which can include helping them to become more job-ready and avail of lifelong learning opportunities. To further this type of approach, the Government has now mandated the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to identify specific measures and actions which it can take as part of the development of its new employment services strategy.

The National Child Poverty Target

The national child poverty target identified in Better Outcomes Brighter Futures was a 66% reduction in the number of children in consistent poverty by the end of 2020 (from its 2011 level of 107,000). Implicit in this target is the understanding that no child in Ireland should live in poverty and that, where it happens due to adverse circumstances, available supports should ensure that the child and their family exit poverty as soon as is possible.

In practice the impact of the economic recession was such that the figure actually increased to just under 150,000, although it has since reduced to just under 92,000 at the end of 2018 (latest data available). This means that, of the entire reduction planned for a nine year period, over three-quarters of it will now need to be achieved over a three year period.

Chapter 5: Supporting Families and Children

Nevertheless given the improvement in our economic circumstances, the initiatives already under way and the new initiatives now planned, the Government reaffirms its commitment to the national target of reducing the number of children in consistent poverty by 70,000 from its 2011 level. The Government will continue to report on progress against this target and will set a new national target for the period to the end of 2025 consistent with any revised EU targets for the period, arising from the development of the successor to the Europe 2020 strategy.

In addition, consistent with our approach of adopting standard EU metrics and striving to position Ireland in a top-ranking position compared to other EU countries, the Government is setting a specific child poverty target using the standard EU measure of At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion (AROPE). At present Ireland is ranked 20th among all EU countries, with an AROPE rate of 23.9% for children up to age 18. The target is to move into the top five ranked countries, which will require a 33% improvement in our performance and a reduction in the AROPE rate to 16% or less.

Statement of Commitments

The commitments of the Government outlined in this chapter, which will be subject to monitoring and reporting under the governance process for this Roadmap, are set out in the table below:

No.	Commitment	Responsible Departments	Timeline
29	Implement an additional two weeks paid parental leave in 2019 and extend this to seven weeks over the subsequent three years (<i>see also commitment 7 above</i>)	DJE; DEASP	Q4 2019
30	Implement the new National Childcare Scheme, launched in November 2019 (<i>see also commitment 8 above</i>)	DCYA	Q4 2019
31	Introduce a range of measures to improve the quality of early learning and care services to better contribute to positive experiences and outcomes for babies and young children, including increasing qualifications for those working in Early Learning and Care and developing the infrastructure of Continued Professional Development (CPD) supports and mentoring.	DCYA; DES	2021

No.	Commitment	Responsible Departments	Timeline
32	As part of the reform of the early learning and care funding model, develop an appropriate mechanism to control fees charged to parents in return for increased State investment in affordability, quality and sustainability.	DCYA	2021
33	Develop mechanisms to provide additional supports to Early Learning and Care (ELC) settings where there are high proportions of children who are at risk of poverty to mitigate the impacts of early disadvantage. Specifically, informed by the DEIS model, develop a programme for the delivery of ELC in the context of concentrated disadvantage.	DCYA	2021
34	Assess outcomes from the 2019/2020 hot school meals pilot and bring forward a proposal to Government on the feasibility and desirability of extending the pilot to all schools (<i>see also commitment 63 below</i>).	DEASP; DPER	Q2 2021
35	Extend GP care without fees to children aged between 6 and 12 years in a phased basis starting in 2020.	DoH	Q4 2020
36	Review the current system of classifying second adults in households as 'dependent adults' with a view to individualising welfare payments and supports.	DEASP	Q2 2020
37	Use up-to-date research and data to inform decisions with respect to the level of income disregards to ensure lone-parents are not disadvantaged in taking up part time work.	DEASP	Ongoing
38	Identify specific measures and actions which can increase employment rates among lone parents as part of the new employment services strategy.	DEASP	Q4 2020
39	Continue with the implementation of the DEIS Plan 2017.	DES	Ongoing
40	Continue to report on progress against the national target for reducing the number of children experiencing consistent poverty by the end of 2020 and set a new target for the period to the end of 2025 consistent with any revised EU targets for the period.	DEASP; DCYA; DES; DoH	Ongoing

Chapter 6

Supporting People with Disabilities



Chapter 6: Supporting People with Disabilities

Goal: Improve social inclusion of people with disabilities by reducing poverty rates, improving employment outcomes and delivering better services

Changing the narrative – from disability to ability

It is not unfair to say that over the years the potential of people with disabilities to contribute to Irish society has been underestimated. Thankfully this is changing, in large part due to the efforts of people with disabilities, societal transformation, dedicated carers, enlightened medical professionals and determined family members who refused to simply accept the status quo. As a result we are seeing a transformation in our understanding of the needs and the potential of people with disabilities.

There is now a focus on a person's capabilities rather than their disabilities and there is an increased awareness of the rich contribution that people with disabilities can make in communities and workplaces.

This greater understanding of disability is reflected in a wide range of government policies and initiatives in recent years, all designed to improve the social inclusion of people with disabilities. Foremost among these is the *National Disability Inclusion Strategy* (NDIS) which identifies 114 actions across 8 thematic areas to be delivered by 2021. Progress against these actions is overseen by a steering group chaired at Ministerial level and is tracked against a set of 62 indicators identified by the National Disability Authority. Within the framework of the NDIS, other initiatives such as the *Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities* and the *Make Work Pay* reports identify a further 85 actions and 24 recommendations respectively. These actions and recommendations, together with other initiatives taken in education, health (e.g. under Sláintecare), housing (e.g. home adaptation grants) and transport (e.g. Retro-fit Accessibility Programme), are all designed to ensure that people with disabilities can access employment as a key means of reducing income poverty; can rely on good welfare supports where they can't access employment; and can receive any other additional supports required to achieve a standard of living "considered a norm for other people in society", the standard reference level for assessing social inclusion.

Setting Our Ambition Level – New Targets

Many of these actions and recommendations have been implemented or are in progress. This is not to say that everything that can be done has been done. Good progress has been made but there is more to do and much more to be achieved. Although, by some measures, Ireland has the lowest reported prevalence of disability in the EU¹³, poverty rates for people who self-report a disability are among the highest in Europe. These two metrics are inter-related as it is likely that the share of the relatively small number of people who self-report disability in Ireland with a high level of incapacity is higher than the share of the larger number who self-report disability in other EU countries. Nevertheless this data is of concern; we need therefore to maintain and build on the momentum generated in recent years. Towards this end we need to set a level of ambition to inform the ongoing implementation of existing strategies and the development of

¹³ For example see http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=hlth_dp050&lang=en

Chapter 6: Supporting People with Disabilities

renewed/successor strategies in the years ahead. As an example, although poverty rates and employment levels are identified as key indicators by the National Disability Authority, there is no national target for these outcomes. This needs to change.

Accordingly the Government now commits to setting national targets both for the reduction of poverty among people with disabilities and for an improvement in employment outcomes. A focus on these targets will help ensure that the design and implementation of all the measures that we know are required and to which we are already committed will be fit for purpose.

Using standard EU wide metrics, the primary target is to reduce the percentage of people with disability¹⁴ at risk of poverty or social exclusion from a rate of 36.9% in 2018 to no more than 28.7% for the year 2025 and to no more than 22.7% by 2030 (i.e. to become a top 5 country in the EU rankings).

This will be complemented by the employment sub-target to increase the employment rate of people with a disability from the current level of 22.3% (Census 2016) to 25% by Census 2021 and 33% by Census 2026.

Recognising Capability and Cost

One of the observations made in the Make Work Pay report, and a frequent concern raised by disability advocacy groups, is that the current system of social welfare income supports is quite complex and this complexity can make it hard for a person with a disability to evaluate the benefits of work. One of the recommendations in the report is therefore to re-configure the system of payments, as part of which it recommends that proposals be brought forward to address the affordability of everyday living aids for people with disabilities. In addition the report identified a number of changes to the rules relating to income supports that could be implemented in the short term. These include the retention of a free travel pass for people who move into work¹⁵; increases in earnings thresholds for retention of the medical card for people with disabilities; and dispensing with the requirement that work should be of a rehabilitative nature in order for employment earnings to be disregarded in means tests.

These latter important short-term measures have all now been implemented. However, issues remain with regard to the structure of disability payments and to the recognition, through these payments or otherwise, of the additional costs incurred by people with disabilities compared to other people on income support payments.

As is the case with most types of income support the State provides two main income support payments for people with disabilities: the means-tested Disability Allowance Payment and the social insurance-based Invalidity Pension payment. However, unlike other types of contingency addressed by incomes supports (e.g. unemployment), the conditions for access to disability schemes vary; the medical eligibility/capability tests differ; the arrangements to support access to paid work and retain earnings differ; payment rates differ and taxation treatment differs. In addition both schemes adopt a binary approach to disability. A person is considered to be either fully incapable of work or fully capable of work with no recognition that work capabilities can

¹⁴ Defined in terms of people with some or severe activity limitation.
See http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=hlth_dpe010&lang=en

¹⁵ Since 6 April 2017, under the Make Work Pay initiative, if you move from a long-term disability payment to a job, you can keep your entitlement to Free Travel for a period of 5 years, subject to conditions

vary among different people with different types of disability.¹⁶ Similarly the schemes adopt a ‘one size fits all’ approach to the issue of living costs, taking no account of the differing costs incurred by people living with different types of disability. Not surprisingly the *Make Work Pay* report commented as follows: “The current system of supports for people with disabilities, across a range of schemes provided by government departments and other state agencies, is a complex one. It reflects the variety and span of different needs people with disabilities can have, as well as the separate evolution of the different schemes. The outcome is that people find the system difficult to navigate”.

Accordingly the Government commits to review the current structure of disability allowance and invalidity pension payments, with a view to addressing the issues noted above and raised in the *Make Work Pay* report and in particular to recognising differing levels of capability. Towards this end it will publish a ‘strawman’ proposal for consultation purposes before the end of 2020.

In addition the Government has commissioned a Cost of Disability research study, with a view to publishing a full report no later than Q2 2020.

Statement of Commitments

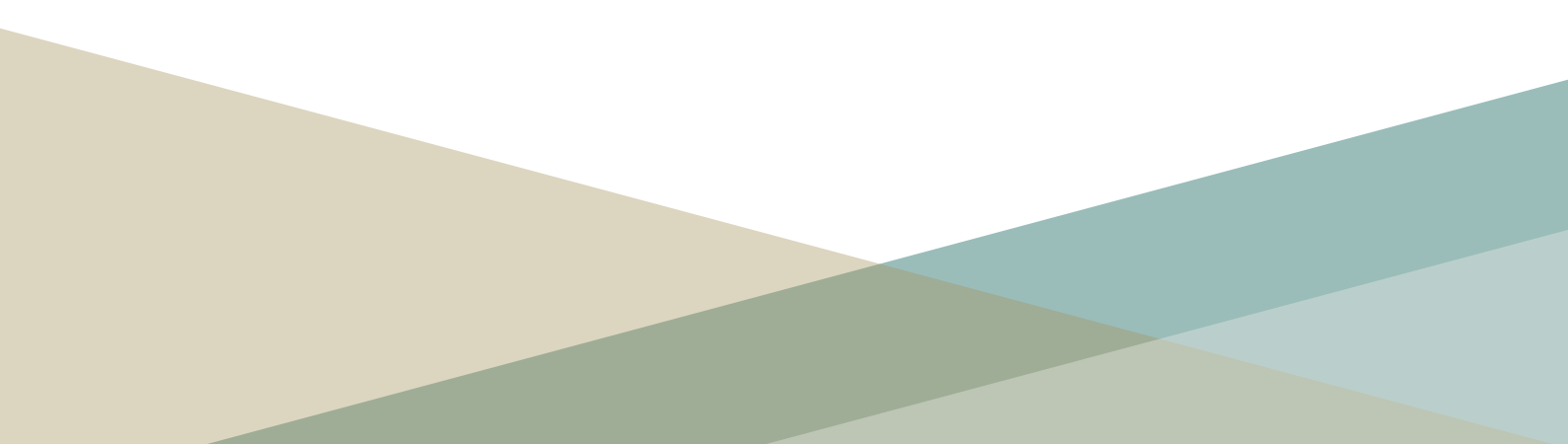
The commitments of the Government outlined in this chapter, which will be subject to monitoring and reporting under the governance process for this Roadmap, are set out in the table below:

No.	Commitment	Responsible Departments	Timeline
41	The Government commits to the continued implementation of the National Disability Inclusion and Comprehensive Employment Strategies and to their review in 2021.	DJE	Q4 2021
42	Specific poverty reduction and employment targets will be set for people with disabilities: Reduce the AROPE rate from 36.9% first to 28.7% (2025) and then to 22.7% (2030); and increase the employment rate from 22.3% first to 25% (2021) and then to 33% (2027).	DEASP	Ongoing
43	Develop and consult on a ‘strawman’ proposal for the restructuring of long term disability payments to simplify the system and take account of the concerns expressed in the <i>Make Work Pay</i> report.	DEASP	Q4 2020
44	Commission a study on the cost of disability and publish a final report with recommendations.	DEASP; DPER	Commission Q2 2019 Report Q1 2020

¹⁶ A separate insurance based scheme Partial Capacity Benefit does allow for a graduated approach to assessment of capability but entry to this scheme is restricted to those who first qualify for the fully incapacitated scheme of Invalidity Pension or are in receipt of Illness Benefit for a minimum of six months.

Chapter 7

Supporting Communities



Chapter 7: Supporting Communities

Goal: Empower communities to address social exclusion

Ireland has a thriving community and voluntary sector. Funded directly by the State via grant and service fees, as well as by private and public donation and some commercial activities, community and voluntary groups leverage the energy, know-how and local knowledge of local volunteers to step-up and give their time both to provide critical local services and to advocate for improved services. It is heartening that Ireland is already in the top quartile of States across the EU in terms of the rates of active citizenship and volunteering.

The State can play a role in delivering supports and services directly but it should not seek to displace the community and voluntary sector. Instead it is better to focus on enhancing the existing community-statutory partnership, supporting community development and local partnership structures and helping local organisations. Such a partnership is essential for better outcomes for communities and the Government is committed to strengthening this partnership and supporting communities as a long-acknowledged approach to addressing poverty, social exclusion and inequality. This will empower communities to identify and provide responses that will meet their needs. One significant approach is the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), which is funded by the State with actions implemented on the ground by the frontline staff of Local Development Companies, who work with marginalised communities and individuals to improve people's lives.

By funding community and voluntary groups, encouraging volunteerism and other forms of social participation (including political activism), in providing local infrastructure and ensuring that the voice of community and voluntary groups informs the development of national policies, Government can provide effective support for a thriving and sustainable community and voluntary infrastructure.

These were the key themes that emerged during the consultation process for this Roadmap and they are themes that are already reflected in a range of Government policies and initiatives and in the fact that the key position of community development is now recognised with a full Ministerial position at the Cabinet table.

Funding the Community and Voluntary Sector

Significant funding is allocated to community and voluntary groups through the provision of grant aid and service fees. Over €600m is distributed in support of community and voluntary groups each year via Pobal, while the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection funds community and local employment schemes to the value of some €400m each year and the Department of Health funds what are known as section 39 organisations to the value of some €0.8bn. Other Departments and bodies, including local authorities, also fund community and voluntary groups while the Departments of Transport, Tourism and Sport and of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht play a critical role in supporting local and national sporting and cultural organisations.

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This very high level of central funding for community and voluntary organisations is indicative of the critical importance of this sector to social inclusion in Ireland. Accordingly the Government is determined that the role of the sector is properly recognised and coherently planned. That is why it is committed to rolling out a new five year strategy to support the community and voluntary sectors: *Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: A Strategy to Support the Community and Voluntary Sectors in Ireland*. It is also formulating a new *National Strategy on Volunteering* and, in order to finalise this work, a National Advisory Group has been established. In parallel it is developing a successor to the *Action Plan for Rural Development* and will shortly conclude a review of *Social Inclusion Through Community Employment*. This body of work will inform future funding and development of the sector.

Encouraging Volunteerism and Social Participation

If the funding described above is a critical enabler of local community work then participation of local volunteers is, if anything, even more important. This is not just in terms of the social benefits to the people receiving the local services provided by volunteers but also in terms of the social and personal benefits to the volunteers themselves. Examples of the range of initiatives and programmes supported through this funding which play a key role in encouraging participation and activism is shown in Box 3 overleaf.

That is why it is appropriate that two of the key metrics to be monitored under this Roadmap are Active Citizenship and the rate of Participation in Voluntary Work. Ireland already scores relatively well compared to other European countries on these measures. However in order to inform the development of the new strategies, in particular the new National Strategy on Volunteering, the Government is now setting a target of improving Ireland's ranking further with a goal of increasing the active citizenship rate from 13% to 17% and the participation rate in voluntary work from 29% to 34%. For instance, increasing participation is a cornerstone of the recently launched National Sports Policy, 2018-2027 which sets out actions to increase participation in sport (containing a particular focus on increasing participation rates among under-represented groups and communities). The latter document notes the importance of volunteering to sports in Ireland and aims to promote inclusion.

It should also be noted that although security of income and availability of services address practical and material concerns, they do not fully address one of the other key concerns of communities, and particularly, older people, isolation. The Government therefore commits to developing the necessary actions to tackle loneliness and isolation, particularly among older people.

Local Infrastructure

Responding to concerns regarding the quality of local infrastructure, investment in the infrastructure at a local level to support the development of communities is a key objective of Project Ireland 2040. As part of Project Ireland 2040 investments of €8.8bn are earmarked under the heading strengthening rural communities, including a €1bn rural regeneration and

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development fund. A separate €2bn urban regeneration and development fund is earmarked for urban areas while significant funding is also being provided for local sports, heritage and transport investments including, for example, €4.5bn for regional and local roads.

Box 3: Some Examples of Community Participation Programmes

Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP):

SICAP is the Government's primary social inclusion intervention. It supports disadvantaged communities and individuals including unemployed people, people living in deprived areas, people with disabilities, single parent families, people on a low income, members of the Traveller and Roma communities and other disadvantaged groups. The programme is managed at a local level by 33 Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs), with support from local authorities, and actions are delivered by local development companies.

The CLÁR programme:

CLÁR provides funding for small scale infrastructure projects in rural areas that have experienced significant levels of de-population. More than 1,200 projects have benefited from funding of €25 million under the programme.

The Community Enhancement Programme:

This programme provides funding towards the enhancing of facilities available to communities such as the renovation of community centres and improvements to town parks.

Community Services Programme:

The Community Services Programme provides funding to community organisations for specific staffing costs with a focus on disadvantaged communities and the employment of people who are distant from the labour market.

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund 2019-2027 (part of Project Ireland 2040):

The Fund will provide investment to support rural renewal, strengthen and build resilience in rural communities and assist in the regeneration of towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000, and outlying areas.

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LEADER Programme 2014-2020:

The LEADER 2014 – 2020 programme is designed to address key challenges facing rural society and deliver supports in addressing the increased levels in poverty and social exclusion.

The Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNO):

The SSNO's overall aim is to provide multi-annual funding towards the core costs of national organisations in the community and voluntary sector to assist them to operate and fund core staff positions.

Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYSPCs):

There are 27 CYPSC county-level committees in Ireland. Their primary priorities are to provide increased opportunities for physical activity; the promotion and support healthy eating in response to food poverty; and the provision of developmental and social supports to children and young people experiencing homelessness.

Local Link Rural Transport Programme:

The Local Link Rural Transport Programme aims to provide a quality nationwide community-based public transport system in rural Ireland which responds to local needs and helps to address rural social exclusion and the integration of rural transport services with other public transport services.

Public Participation Networks (PPNs):

Public Participation Networks have been established in each local authority area and seek to secure greater community participation and input into local authority decision-making processes. Their purpose is to give individuals and communities a greater say.

Local Youth Club Grant Scheme:

The scheme supports volunteer-led youth work activities at a local level with over 600 local youth clubs receiving support annually.

Youth Service Grant Scheme:

The scheme aims to ensure the emergence, promotion, growth and development of youth organisations with distinctive philosophies and programmes aimed at the social education of young people. Funding is made available annually to 30 national and major regional voluntary organisations.

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Recognising that digital connectivity will be critical to sustaining rural communities and combatting social isolation, the Government has proceeded with the National Broadband Plan. Contracts were finalised with the preferred bidder in November 2019 with construction on the fibre network to start immediately.

Listening and Learning

A key concern of many community and voluntary groups is that they are heard by Government. They are concerned that they do not have the influence or leverage of other groups such as business, trade unions, and sectoral organisations. In general the community and voluntary sector is well represented in dialogue with Government. This happens in a number of ways including through the pre-budget and post-budget fora hosted by various Departments, including the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection; the annual Social Inclusion Forum; the National Economic Dialogue; the National Economic and Social Council; the various public consultations on policy documents; and not least through their local activism with public representatives.

Nevertheless the Government is conscious that there may be a fear that this level of engagement could suffer, particularly as economic conditions improve and some problems become less urgent or acute. Accordingly the Government commits to maintaining a significant level of engagement and consultation with the community and voluntary sector and, in particular to ensure that the community and voluntary sector is represented at the National Economic Dialogue.

An All-Island Community: Responding to Brexit

Britain's exit from the European Union (Brexit) is likely, in any scenario, to have a negative impact on the economy including levels of employment and the public finances. However, the Government is optimistic that this challenge can be met and has taken steps to help all economic sectors prepare, as best they can.

A particular concern for the Government has been to reduce the impact of Brexit on progress made in developing community relations under the Good Friday Agreement. As part of this Agreement the Government has, together with the Northern Ireland administration and the UK Government, supported initiatives designed to improve social integration and create a stronger sense of community particularly in border regions.

Notwithstanding Brexit, both the Irish and UK Governments remain committed to developing and promoting further North/South consultation, co-operation and common action concerning policies on poverty and social exclusion over the period of this Roadmap. Steps have already been taken by the Irish and UK Governments, as part of the long-standing Common Travel Area arrangements to provide formal reassurance for those reliant upon social security entitlements.

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Under the Common Travel Area, Irish and British citizens can move freely and live in either country and enjoy associated rights and privileges, including access to employment, healthcare, education, social benefits, and the right to vote in certain elections. The Common Travel Area pre-dates Irish and UK membership of the EU and is not dependent on it. Both the Government of Ireland and the UK Government have committed to maintaining the Common Travel Area in all circumstances.

This means that after the UK leaves the EU (and in all scenarios) Irish and British citizens will continue to enjoy the right to travel, live, and work in the UK and Ireland as before. In this context, Ireland has made arrangements with the UK to maintain current measures with regard to social security. As a result, Irish and British citizens living in either country (including Northern Ireland) will maintain the right to benefit from social insurance contributions made when working in either country and to access social insurance payments in either country on the same basis as at present. In addition, EU citizens will maintain the right to benefit from social insurance contributions made in the UK when establishing eligibility for relevant Irish contributory payments. It will continue to be possible to export payments, such as child benefit, from Ireland to the UK (or vice versa).

To this end, a Convention on Social Security has been agreed to provide the legal basis for payments to continue as before notwithstanding whatever form of Brexit is ultimately finalised. In addition the All Ireland free travel scheme has been safeguarded and will be maintained. The Government will continue to insist that these North South arrangements are protected.

Statement of Commitments

The commitments of the Government outlined in this chapter, which will be subject to monitoring and reporting under the governance process for this Roadmap, are set out in the table below:

No.	Commitment	Responsible Departments	Timeline
45	Develop an implementation plan to deliver on the objectives of tackling loneliness and isolation.	DoH	Commenced in 2019; continuing in 2020
46	Set specific new targets which can inform the development of relevant Government policies and strategies: increase the rate of Active Citizenship to 17% and Participation in Voluntary Work to 34%.	All Departments	Ongoing

No.	Commitment	Responsible Departments	Timeline
47	Finalise and publish the successor to the Action Plan for Rural Development.	DRCD	Q1 2020
48	Finalise and publish a National Volunteering Strategy.	DRCD	Q1 2020
49	Complete the review of Social Inclusion through Community Employment and implement any recommendations arising.	DEASP	Q2 2020
50	Implement the actions in the National Sports Policy, 2018-2027 (which contains a particular focus on addressing specific inequalities in participation (i.e. ethnic minority groups, people with a disability, etc.)).	DTTAS	Ongoing
51	Award contract for the implementation of the National Broadband Plan.	DCCAE	Q4 2019
52	Renew and refresh the system and level of engagement between Government bodies and the community and voluntary sector.	All Departments	Ongoing
53	Ensure that reciprocal north-south entitlements to welfare benefits, the all Island free travel scheme and access to education and healthcare are maintained following the implementation of Brexit.	DFAT; DEASP; DES; DoH	Ongoing

Chapter 8

Core Essentials:

Healthcare, Housing, Energy and Food



Chapter 8: Core Essentials: Healthcare, Housing, Energy and Food

Goal: To ensure that all people can live with confidence that they have access to good quality healthcare, housing, energy and food

Previous chapters have focused on supports and services to particular categories of people: workers, those seeking work, older people, families/children and people with disabilities. However all people, regardless of personal circumstances, share a common reliance on the core essentials of daily existence including healthcare, housing, energy and food.

We are fortunate in Ireland that we are well endowed in terms of food production and supply, that we have a healthcare system of well qualified and professional medics, that we have a stock of good quality housing and that we have secure sources of both green and carbon based energy with well established distribution networks.

Compared to other countries, including highly developed countries, Ireland is relatively well positioned to offer its citizens reliable access to and secure availability of the basic essentials required to secure our safety and well-being.

However, good overall availability does not always translate into reliable and quality access for every individual. People on low incomes; people with disabilities; people from marginalised communities; and people who don't have the strong family and social networks most of us enjoy, can struggle to secure even the basic essentials. They can live a precarious existence constantly worried about the tenure of their accommodation, the source of the next meal, the medical treatment of their children and whether or not they can turn on the heating the next time it turns cold. In the absence of certainty about the supply of these core essentials for daily living, their ability to take on other challenges and other opportunities in life (education, employment, and leisure) can be undermined.

For those who are living at, or near, the poverty threshold, access to basic essential services on a free or subsidised basis can reduce the expenses to be covered from within their disposable income. This allows them to direct their income towards other necessities of everyday living and reduces the risk of deprivation. In this way the anxiety which would otherwise be felt by people in a vulnerable situation is reduced, the impact of income poverty is mitigated and their prospects of social inclusion are enhanced.

The Government has already published a suite of sectoral policies and strategies covering, for example, health, housing and energy. The delivery of these policies will play a vital role in improving social inclusion in the years to come. That is why there are specific targets related to, for example, health and housing outcomes in the expanded set of metrics being used to evaluate progress under this Roadmap for Social Inclusion. In addition progress on a number of key commitments extracted from, or related to the sectoral strategies will form a key component of the governance and reporting programme for this Roadmap. These are set out below.

Healthcare

Recognising that healthcare costs can impose a significant pressure on working families, the Government has already made a series of reforms that has seen the number of people having access to free GP services and medical cards increase by nearly 33% since 2007.

Chapter 8: Core Essentials: Healthcare, Housing, Energy and Food

These reforms have been of significant benefit to people classified as being at risk of consistent poverty: 89% of people who are in consistent poverty have a medical or GP visit card, compared to 42% of people who are not in consistent poverty. In addition to these changes, the re-introduction and extension of the Treatment Benefit scheme giving access to optical and dental treatment has benefited workers, irrespective of income and irrespective of whether they are self-employed or employees, a change that will further reduce the rate of in-work poverty.

In order to further reduce the healthcare cost burden on families, the Government will, through its *Sláintecare* programme and the *Smile agus Sláinte Oral Health* policy, continue to improve and extend access to healthcare services, including developing options for access to a health service that is free at the point of delivery. As part of this approach it will consider if the 'Smile agus Sláinte' approach could be expanded to other services, such as ophthalmic services. It will also review the operation of the Treatment Benefit scheme to consider if it can be improved to help reduce the impact of poverty, for example through the extension of coverage to children of qualifying parents.

Inclusion Health Policy

Within Irish society there are socially excluded groups who experience extreme levels of health inequalities, with higher morbidity and mortality rates than the general population. They include people living with substance abuse, homeless people, those within the Traveller and Roma communities and people who have spent time in institutional care or in prison. People within these groups can live much shorter lives compared to the rest of the population, with an average life expectancy for some of circa 40 years.

Inclusion health is a framework for driving improvements in health outcomes for these groups, encompassing research, policy coordination and services delivery. It aims to improve access to health and related services for these groups through coordinated and targeted actions. The Department of Health commenced development of an Inclusion Health policy in 2019.

Housing

Access to affordable housing and security of tenure are key factors impacting a person's sense of well-being. Security of tenure is critically important in providing a person with the stability they require to complete education or training or to find and sustain employment. Following the collapse of the construction sector during the recent recession, and more recently the strong growth in incomes, employment and population, there is a shortage of housing in Ireland at present concentrated in particular urban locations. In terms of security of tenure, the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019, enacted on 24 May 2019, introduced a number of key measures and reforms designed to enhance enforcement powers for the RTB, provide greater security of tenure for tenants and underpin further the operation of the Rent Pressure Zone (RPZ) arrangements, along with some further targeted priority measures.

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The Government has also taken measures to increase the building of new housing stock (including social housing); to bring vacant housing back into use; to make it easier for people to access funds to purchase their own homes; and, importantly, to help people retain and secure their existing homes. There are, however, no 'quick-fix' solutions. Addressing housing deficits takes time and requires perseverance particularly when both the economy and the population are growing. In this context, *Rebuilding Ireland, the Government's Action Plan on Homelessness and Housing* sets out a range of solutions and measures to meet the housing needs of families and individuals in this country.

Under the *Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan*, over 50,000 new social homes will be delivered in the period to 2021 through construction, refurbishment, acquisition and leasing. In addition, 88,000 households will have their housing need met through the Housing Assistance Payment scheme and the Rental Accommodation Scheme. In the years beyond 2021, the Government has committed to the delivery of 12,000 additional social housing homes annually, through construction, refurbishment, acquisition and leasing programmes. *Rebuilding Ireland* is supported by an overall investment framework of over €6 billion and, in 2020 alone, a housing budget of €2.6 billion was provided by Government, the highest budget ever in any single year.

Supports to Manage Energy Costs

The Government already supports people at risk of energy poverty through a number of direct fuel or energy related income supports/subsidies. These include the Household Benefit Package and the Free Fuel Allowance which when combined provides a direct after-tax subsidy of €1,050 per year to recipients of qualifying social welfare payments.

In addition to these income supports/subsidies the Strategy to Combat Energy Poverty¹⁷, drawing on an evidence base produced by the ESRI and the Vincentian Partnership, recognises that the efficient use of energy can permanently reduce deprivation in a manner that cannot be achieved by income supports. For example improving a building energy rating of a home from E1 to B2 can generate annual savings to the household of €2,524 per year. That is why the Better Energy Warmer Homes scheme has already provided free energy efficiency upgrades to over 135,000 households in receipt of qualifying welfare payments. The Warmth and Wellbeing Scheme, a €20m scheme for deep energy efficient interventions targeted at people in energy poverty suffering from acute health conditions, is also being piloted. The strategy also commits to expanding eligibility criteria for energy efficiency schemes to capture more people living in deprivation and to greater use of community-led approaches to addressing energy poverty.

The recently published Climate Action Plan includes a commitment to review ways to improve how current energy poverty schemes target those most in need. This will include examining options to increase funding streams for current energy poverty schemes and identifying means of increasing efficiencies, reducing costs and increasing capacity and skills in delivery of those schemes. The Climate Action Plan also considers the impact that tackling the climate emergency may have on individuals and groups within society and includes a commitment to ensure that, in developing proposals for carbon pricing, the impact on low income groups and those facing greater challenges adopting are considered.

¹⁷ <https://www.dcae.gov.ie/en-ie/energy/publications/Documents/5/A%20Strategy%20to%20Combat%20Energy%20Poverty%20-%20Web%20Version.pdf>

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Food Poverty

Food Poverty has been defined as the inability to have an adequate and nutritious diet due to issues of affordability or accessibility. It is measured¹⁸ by the percentage of individuals experiencing one or more of the following three items:

- Unable to afford a meal with meat, or vegetarian equivalent, every second day;
- Unable to afford a weekly roast dinner (or vegetarian equivalent)
- Missing one substantial meal in the previous fortnight due to lack of money

Over the life of the National Action for Social Inclusion 2007-2017, the rate of food poverty increased from 7% in 2007 to a high of 13.2% in 2013. This was in line with increases in the overall basic deprivation measure which peaked in 2013. By 2018, it had dropped to 7%, similar to the 2007 level.

This reduction is welcome and reflects, at least in part, the impact of the Ireland’s participation in the EU FEAD programme (Food Aid for the Most Deprived), the expansion of the school meals service, and programmes such as ‘meals-on wheels’. However, the fact that 7% of people are in food poverty is still of concern.

Therefore in order to address this issue, the Government commits to develop a comprehensive programme of work to further explore the drivers of food poverty and to identify mitigating actions. This will complement the action contained in the First 5 strategy for babies and young children, to identify and scope the issue of food poverty. The Government began a pilot for the introduction of a hot school meals programme in the 2019-2020 school year and will consider conclusions from that pilot in Q3 2020.

Statement of Commitments

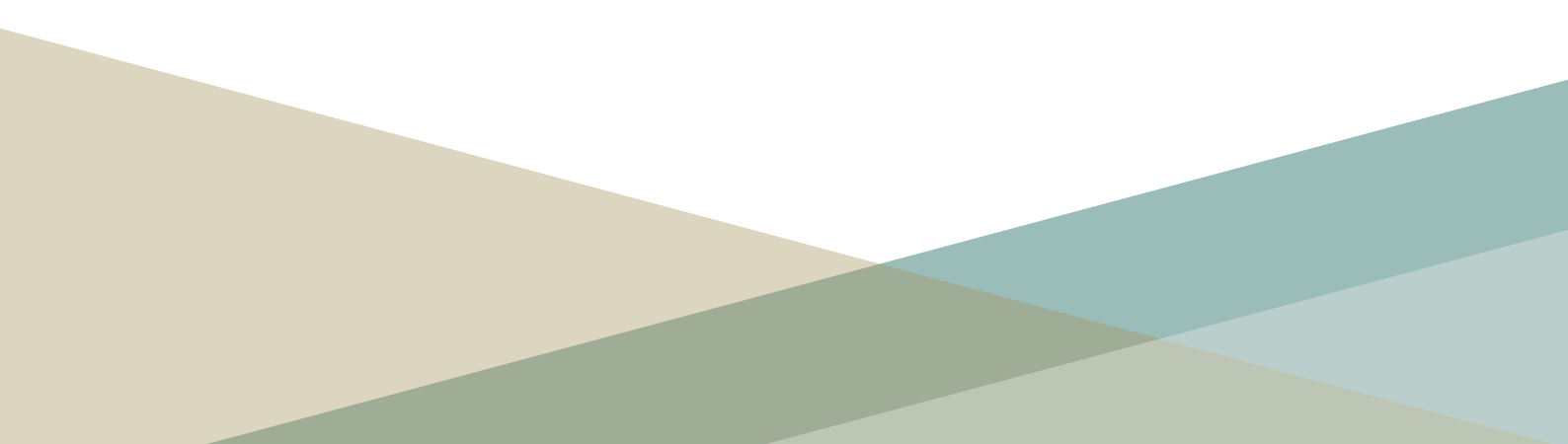
The commitments of the Government outlined in this chapter, which will be subject to monitoring and reporting under the governance process for this Roadmap, are set out in the table below:

No.	Commitment	Responsible Departments	Timeline
54	Implement Sláintecare through the delivery of annual action plans and report on progress with respect to the delivery of the Sláintecare strategy and other health policies such as Smile agus Sláinte.	DoH	Ongoing to 2026

No.	Commitment	Responsible Departments	Timeline
55	Develop an Inclusion Health policy to address the healthcare needs of socially excluded groups who experience greater levels of health inequalities.	DoH	Work to commence in 2019
56	Review the feasibility of adapting the Smile agus Sláinte approach to other primary care services, including ophthalmic services.	DoH	Q2 2021
57	Review operation of the Treatment Benefit scheme and consider options to improve its impact in reducing deprivation and poverty.	DEASP	Q3 2020
58	As part of Rebuilding Ireland, complete the migration of long-term rent supplement claimants to the Housing Assistance Payment scheme.	DHPLG; DEASP	Q4 2020
59	Under Rebuilding Ireland, deliver 50,000 new social homes through construction, refurbishment, acquisition and leasing, with the delivery of 12,000 additional social housing homes annually, through construction, refurbishment, acquisition and leasing programmes.	DHPLG	50,000 by end 2021; 12,000 annually thereafter
60	As part of the Climate Action Plan, review ways to improve how current energy poverty schemes target those most in need.	DCCAE	Q4 2019
61	Develop a comprehensive programme of work to further explore the drivers of food poverty and to identify mitigating actions.	DoH; DEASP; DRCD; DPER; DES; DCYA	Q2 2021
62	Pilot a meals programme in early learning and care settings to address food poverty for young children.	DCYA	Q4 2020
63	Introduce a hot school meals pilot. Review the pilot (DEASP with input from DES) and report to Government with proposals (<i>see also commitment 34 above</i>).	DEASP DEASP; DES; DPER	Q3 2019 Q2 2021

Chapter 9

Implementation and Governance



Chapter 9: Implementation and Governance

The successful implementation of the actions outlined in this Roadmap is fundamental to achieving the ambition of becoming the most socially inclusive country in the EU and of achieving the seven core goals set out in each of the preceding chapters. There are three dimensions to ensuring that the commitments are implemented with impact:

- Establish an authoritative governance process, which can support the people in each Department and agency responsible for delivery; identify if implementation is failing; and mandate the appropriate remediation.
- Assess implementation for impact by ensuring the timely availability of appropriate data and the use of informed and expert analytics to evaluate impact.
- Report publicly on progress and review the actions at an appropriate time with an assessment as to whether any actions need to be varied, removed or added to the programme of activity.

Governance

The Government commits to establishing a Social Inclusion Roadmap Steering Group (SIRSG) to be chaired by the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection. This group will comprise senior representatives of responsible Departments at Assistant Secretary Level who will be designated as Social Inclusion Responsibility Officers (SIRO). This will ensure that implementation is firmly on the agenda of the Management Board of each Department. The Steering Group will also include at least two external members.

It is intended that the Steering Group will meet twice per year with the Social Inclusion Division of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection providing the secretariat and co-ordinating actions reporting in the periods between formal meetings. In addition to the Steering Group, the Roadmap will be subject to monitoring and oversight at Cabinet, Senior Official and Department level.

Authority for Monitoring at Government level:

This will be vested in the Cabinet Committee with responsibility for Social Policy. Cabinet Committees derive their authority from Government and have a membership comprising two or more members of Government. They are chaired by the Taoiseach. The work of the Cabinet Committee aims to ensure that public policies and services support a socially inclusive and fair society and to assist in renewing and transforming the public service. The Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, as chair of the SIRSG, will submit an annual progress report to the Committee.

Authority for Engagement by Departments:

This will be vested in the Senior Officials Group reporting to the Cabinet Committee. The Senior Officials Group was established to support the work of the Cabinet Committee. It usually meets in advance of Cabinet Committee meetings but can also provide cross-departmental coordination on relevant issues not requiring formal consideration at a Cabinet Committee. All annual progress reports will be submitted to the Group for discussion prior to consideration

Chapter 9: Implementation and Governance

by the Cabinet Committee. The SIRSG may also propose other thematic or periodic reports on implementation of the Roadmap for consideration by the Group and Cabinet Committee, as appropriate.

Authority for Monitoring and Reporting on Progress of the Roadmap as a whole:

This will be vested in the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection will be responsible for the monitoring and reporting on progress for the Roadmap as a whole, as well as for relevant individual actions. Monitoring and reporting on progress will be performed by the Department's Social Inclusion Division, which has responsibility for poverty reduction and social inclusion policy and which will provide the Secretariat for the SIRSG.

Assessment/Evaluation

It is vital that the necessary data and technical supports are in place to enable development, monitoring and evaluation of this Roadmap and also of social inclusion and poverty reduction in all government policy. The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection will work closely with other Government Departments and the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in order to facilitate improved measurement of policy outcomes and to further develop collaborations. This body of work will be guided and informed by the work of the Technical Advisory Group which is convened and chaired by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection at least three times per year.

Reporting and Review

The Annual Poverty and Social Inclusion Progress Report (Social Inclusion Monitor) published by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, will be expanded to include a status update on all of the commitments in this Roadmap, as well as progress in reaching the targets for each of the metrics listed in Chapter 1. In addition to being presented to the Steering Group and to Government, it will be published on the Government website (www.gov.ie), with a copy being lodged in the Oireachtas library.

The Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection will also seek to present and discuss the report with the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Employment Affairs and Social Protection

Finally, an independent mid-term review of the Roadmap will be undertaken in 2022.

Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

While the implementation of actions in the Roadmap will be reported in the annual progress report, it is important that there are systems in place to monitor and evaluate the development and effectiveness of policy throughout its life. The Government has already committed to the development of a process of budget and policy proofing as a means of advancing equality, reducing poverty and strengthening economic and social rights. This will build on the existing systems in place such as poverty impact assessments.

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Poverty impact assessment (PIA):

This is the process by which government departments, local authorities and State agencies assess policies and programmes at design, implementation and review stages in relation to the likely impact that they will have, or have had, on poverty. Poverty Impact Assessments remain an important part of the regulatory impact assessment process.

Equality and Gender Proofing:

The introduction of Equality and Gender Proofing ensures that institutional arrangements are in place to support equality and gender proofing, both in the independent fiscal and budget office and within key government departments, and draws on the expertise of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) to support the proofing process. The scope of this initiative has initially focused on gender but has been broadened to other dimensions of equality including poverty, socioeconomic inequality and disability. This development of the initiative is being supported by an Equality Budgeting Expert Advisory Group.

Public Sector Duty:

All public bodies in Ireland have a responsibility to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of their customers, service users and everyone affected by their policies and plans. The development of this Roadmap was informed by the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.

Social Impact Assessment (SIA):

This is an evidence-based methodology which estimates the likely distributive effects of policies on household incomes, families, poverty and access to employment. It uses a tax-welfare simulation model known as SWITCH¹⁹, which was developed by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), to measure the distributive and poverty impacts of policies on family types, lifecycle groups and gender. The model is currently used by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection; the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform; the Department of Children and Youth Affairs; the Department of Health and the Department of Finance.

The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection will continue to publish an integrated Social Impact Assessment, which includes the main welfare and direct tax measures in annual budgets. Its purpose is to inform public understanding on the cumulative effect of budgetary policies on income distribution and social equality. The Social Impact Assessment of each Budget will be published on the Government website (www.gov.ie).

¹⁹ Simulating Welfare and Income Tax Changes

Chapter 9: Implementation and Governance

Statement of Commitments

The commitments of the Government outlined in this chapter, which will be subject to monitoring and reporting under the governance process for this Roadmap, are set out in the table below:

No.	Commitment	Responsible Departments	Timeline
64	Establish a Social Inclusion Roadmap Steering Group to be chaired by the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection.	DEASP	Q1 2020
65	Nominate a senior manager at Assistant Secretary as a Social Inclusion Responsible Officer to participate in the Steering Group.	Departments with Roadmap commitments	Q1 2020
66	Work with the CSO and other relevant bodies to ensure that the data required to track progress and assess impact are available.	DEASP	Q1 2020
67	Publish an annual report on progress against each commitment and key metric.	DEASP	Annually
68	Present the report to and discuss progress with the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Employment Affairs and Social Protection.	DEASP	Annually
69	Publish an annual report card on progress against each commitment and ambition.	DEASP and Departments with Roadmap commitments	Annually

Appendices: Supporting Documentation

Appendix 1:

Full List of Commitments

The following supporting documentation is available on the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection webpages on the Government website (www.gov.ie).

Appendix 2: Trends in Social Inclusion Data for the period 2010-2018

Appendix 3: Glossary

Appendix 4: EU and international initiatives

Appendix 1: Full List of Commitments



No.	Commitment	Responsible Departments	Timeline [^]
1	Ensure that progress in respect of Future Jobs Ireland; Enterprise 2025; the Apprenticeship Action Plan; and the Further Education and Training Strategy is monitored and reported as part of the Roadmap monitoring programme.	DEASP; DBEI; DES	Ongoing
2	Develop and publish a new Further Education and Training Strategy for the next five year period from 2020, ensuring that it includes specific provisions to support socially excluded groups access training and education support.	DES	Q1 2020
3	Develop and publish a successor employment services strategy to Pathways to Work, with a focus on increasing labour market participation and improving employment transitions.	DEASP	Q1 2020
4	Review existing programmes as part of the new employment services strategy, to cater for the needs of marginalised groups/ socially excluded people.	DEASP; DES	Q1 2020
5	Convene the Labour Market Advisory Council to advise on the development of a successor plan to Pathways to Work.	DEASP	Q1 2020
6	Develop a communications campaign to highlight the ability of people to retain key welfare benefits when taking up employment.	DEASP	Q4 2019
7	Implement an additional two weeks paid parental leave in 2019 and extend this to seven weeks over the subsequent three years (<i>see also commitment 29 below</i>).	DJE; DEASP	Q4 2019
8	Implement the new National Childcare Scheme, launched in November 2019 (<i>see also commitment 30 below</i>).	DCYA	Q4 2019

No.	Commitment	Responsible Departments	Timeline [^]
9	Undertake a Carers Needs Assessment within a community healthcare organisation to assess the needs of family carers across all care groups.	DoH	Work to commence in 2020
10	Introduce a new statutory scheme of regulation for home care designed to support family carers and integrate with other health and social care services.	DoH	Work to commence in 2019
11	Examine options to further support carers who wish to increase their level of engagement with or transition into full time employment, education or training.	DEASP	Q2 2020
12	Establish a statutory code of conduct for the determination of the employment status of workers.	DEASP	Q1 2020
13	Build and expand the focused inspection team established to investigate, and prosecute as appropriate, instances of false declaration of workers as self-employed for social insurance purposes.	DEASP	Ongoing
14	Enforce legislation providing for the application of interest charges on late payments of social insurance contributions where a worker was incorrectly declared as 'self-employed'.	DEASP	Ongoing
15	Commission, with the support of the Labour Market Advisory Council, a study of trends in employment arrangements in Ireland.	DEASP	Q2 2020
16	Develop and run a communications campaign to increase awareness of in work income support payments for families on low incomes.	DEASP	Q4 2019
17	Institute a biennial review of the earnings thresholds used to qualify for in-work income supports for families on low incomes.	DEASP	Q3 2020

No.	Commitment	Responsible Departments	Timeline [^]
18	Continue to target a reduction in poverty among children and families on low incomes as part of the annual budget process.	DEASP; DPER	Ongoing
19	Establish and report on a new target in respect of Child Poverty, to improve Ireland's ranking from 20th to at least 5th for the EU SILC reporting year of 2025. This will be equivalent to reducing the percentage of children under 18 years of age at risk of poverty and social exclusion from 23.9% to 16%.	DEASP	Q1 2020 – Q4 2025 ^{^^}
20	Set and report on a new target to further improve Ireland's EU ranking for 'in-work poverty' from 3rd to 2nd by reducing the rate of in-work poverty' to 2%.	DEASP	Q1 2020 – Q4 2025 ^{^^}
21	Review options for improving the financial management competence and literacy / access to financial management for people on low incomes and report to Government with a proposed approach.	DEASP; DES; DRCD	Q2 2020
22	Finalise an approach for benchmarking pension payments for Government decision.	DEASP	Q1 2020
23	Subject to Government decision, develop and prepare any necessary changes to legislation to give effect to a benchmarking approach.	DEASP	Q1 2020
24	Apply the benchmark in adjusting Pension changes for Budget 2021.	DEASP; DPER	Q4 2020
25	Consider and prepare a report for Government on the potential application of the benchmarking approach to other welfare payments.	DEASP	Q3 2020
26	Continue to train GPs and primary care teams in the management of dementia under the Primary Care Education, Pathways and Research in Dementia (PREPARED) project.	DoH	Ongoing

No.	Commitment	Responsible Departments	Timeline [^]
27	Provide 4,500 additional short-term and long-term residential care beds across the public system in Community Nursing Units and other step-down facilities. ¹	DoH	2027
28	Continue the refurbishment or replacement of 90 public community nursing units and long term residential care facilities for older people across the country.	DoH	Ongoing
29	Implement an additional two weeks paid parental leave in 2019 and extend this to seven weeks over the subsequent three years (<i>see also commitment 7 above</i>).	DJE; DEASP	Q4 2019
30	Implement the new National Childcare Scheme, launched in November 2019 (<i>see also commitment 8 above</i>).	DCYA	Q4 2019
31	Introduce a range of measures to improve the quality of early learning and care services to better contribute to positive experiences and outcomes for babies and young children, including increasing qualifications for those working in Early Learning and Care and developing the infrastructure of Continued Professional Development (CPD) supports and mentoring.	DCYA; DES	2021
32	As part of the reform of the early learning and care funding model, develop an appropriate mechanism to control fees charged to parents in return for increased State investment in affordability, quality and sustainability.	DCYA	2021
33	Develop mechanisms to provide additional supports to Early Learning and Care (ELC) settings where there are high proportions of children who are at risk of poverty to mitigate the impacts of early disadvantage. Specifically, informed by the DEIS model, develop a programme for the delivery of ELC in the context of concentrated disadvantage.	DCYA	2021

¹ To be provided for under the National Development Plan published as part of the Project Ireland 2040 policy initiative

No.	Commitment	Responsible Departments	Timeline [^]
34	Assess outcomes from the 2019/2020 hot school meals pilot and bring forward a proposal to Government on the feasibility and desirability of extending the pilot to all schools (<i>see also commitment 63 below</i>).	DEASP; DPER	Q2 2021
35	Extend GP care without fees to children aged between 6 and 12 years in a phased basis starting in 2020.	DoH	Q4 2020
36	Review the current system of classifying second adults in households as 'dependent adults' with a view to individualising welfare payments and supports.	DEASP	Q2 2020
37	Use up-to-date research and data to inform decisions with respect to the level of income disregards to ensure lone-parents are not disadvantaged in taking up part time work.	DEASP	Ongoing
38	Identify specific measures and actions which can increase employment rates among lone parents as part of the new employment services strategy.	DEASP	Q4 2020
39	Continue with the implementation of the DEIS Plan 2017.	DES	Ongoing
40	Continue to report on progress against the national target for reducing the number of children experiencing consistent poverty by the end of 2020 and set a new target for the period to the end of 2025 consistent with any revised EU targets for the period.	DEASP; DCYA; DES; DoH	Ongoing
41	The Government commits to the continued implementation of the National Disability Inclusion and Comprehensive Employment Strategies and to their review in 2021.	DJE	Q4 2021

No.	Commitment	Responsible Departments	Timeline [^]
42	Specific poverty reduction and employment targets will be set for people with disabilities: Reduce the AROPE rate from 36.9% first to 28.7% (2025) and then to 22.7% (2030); and increase the employment rate from 22.3% first to 25% (2021) and then to 33% (2027).	DEASP	Ongoing
43	Develop and consult on a 'strawman' proposal for the restructuring of long term disability payments to simplify the system and take account of the concerns expressed in the <i>Make Work Pay</i> report.	DEASP	Q4 2020
44	Commission a study on the cost of disability and publish a final report with recommendations.	DEASP; DPER	Commission Q2 2019 Report Q1 2020
45	Develop an implementation plan to deliver on the objectives of tackling loneliness and isolation.	DoH	Commenced in 2019; continuing in 2020
46	Set specific new targets which can inform the development of relevant Government policies and strategies: increase the rate of Active Citizenship to 17% and Participation in Voluntary Work to 34%.	All Departments	Ongoing
47	Finalise and publish the successor to the Action Plan for Rural Development.	DRCD	Q1 2020
48	Finalise and publish a National Volunteering Strategy.	DRCD	Q1 2020
49	Complete the review of Social Inclusion through Community Employment and implement any recommendations arising.	DEASP	Q2 2020

No.	Commitment	Responsible Departments	Timeline [^]
50	Implement the actions in the National Sports Policy, 2018-2027 (which contains a particular focus on addressing specific inequalities in participation (i.e. ethnic minority groups, people with a disability, etc.)).	DTTAS	Ongoing
51	Award contract for the implementation of the National Broadband Plan.	DCCAIE	Q4 2019
52	Renew and refresh the system and level of engagement between Government bodies and the community and voluntary sector.	All Departments	Ongoing
53	Ensure that reciprocal north-south entitlements to welfare benefits, the all Island free travel scheme and access to education and healthcare are maintained following the implementation of Brexit.	DFAT; DEASP; DES; DoH	Ongoing
54	Implement Sláintecare through the delivery of annual action plans and report on progress with respect to the delivery of the Sláintecare strategy and other health policies such as Smile agus Sláinte.	DoH	Ongoing to 2026.
55	Develop an Inclusion Health policy to address the healthcare needs of socially excluded groups who experience greater levels of health inequalities.	DoH	Work to commence in 2019
56	Review the feasibility of adapting the Smile agus Sláinte approach to other primary care services, including ophthalmic services.	DoH	Q2 2021
57	Review operation of the Treatment Benefit scheme and consider options to improve its impact in reducing deprivation and poverty.	DEASP	Q3 2020
58	As part of Rebuilding Ireland, complete the migration of long-term rent supplement claimants to the Housing Assistance Payment scheme.	DHPLG; DEASP	Q4 2020

No.	Commitment	Responsible Departments	Timeline [^]
59	Under Rebuilding Ireland, deliver 50,000 new social homes through construction, refurbishment, acquisition and leasing, with the delivery of 12,000 additional social housing homes annually, through construction, refurbishment, acquisition and leasing programmes.	DHPLG	50,000 by end 2021; 12,000 annually thereafter
60	As part of the Climate Action Plan, review ways to improve how current energy poverty schemes target those most in need.	DCCAIE	Q4 2019
61	Develop a comprehensive programme of work to further explore the drivers of food poverty and to identify mitigating actions.	DoH; DEASP; DRCD; DPER; DES; DCYA	Q2 2021
62	Pilot a meals programme in early learning and care settings to address food poverty for young children.	DCYA	Q4 2020
63	Introduce a hot school meals pilot. Review the pilot (DEASP with input from DES) and report to Government with proposals. <i>(see also commitment 34 above).</i>	DEASP DEASP; DES; DPER	Q3 2019 Q2 2021
64	Establish a Social Inclusion Roadmap Steering Group to be chaired by the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection.	DEASP	Q1 2020
65	Nominate a senior manager at Assistant Secretary as a Social Inclusion Responsible Officer to participate in the Steering Group.	Departments with Roadmap commitments	Q1 2020
66	Work with the CSO and other relevant bodies to ensure that the data required to track progress and assess impact are available.	DEASP	Q1 2020
67	Publish an annual report on progress against each commitment and key metric.	DEASP	Annually

No.	Commitment	Responsible Departments	Timeline [^]
68	Present the report to and discuss progress with the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Employment Affairs and Social Protection.	DEASP	Annually
69	Publish an annual report card on progress against each commitment and ambition.	DEASP and Departments with Roadmap commitments	Annually

Note:

The table includes 66 unique commitments, three of which appear across multiple chapters reflecting the structure of the Roadmap.

[^]In some cases, implementation of Commitments will commence in 2019 and this will continue into 2020 (or beyond).

^{^^}The relevant SILC data is likely to be available by 2026/27.



Rialtas na hÉireann
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